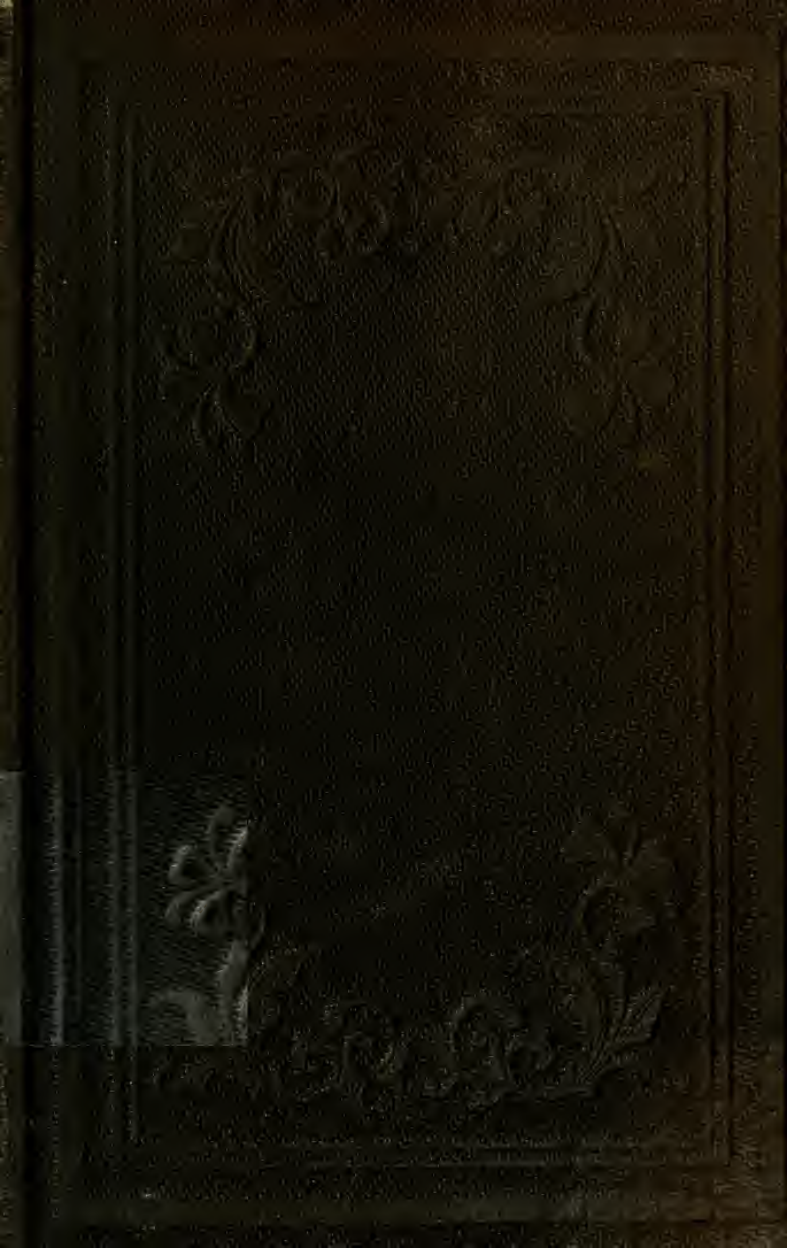

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A

CANDID DISCUSSION

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY

DANIEL CLARK, JR.,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN FREDONIA, N. Y.

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PREFACE.

The following treatise is designed, not to enlighten ministers, but to instruct the common people. Especially is it intended for the benefit of recent converts to Christ, whose minds are embarrassed on the subject of Baptism; and of parents in pedo-baptist churches, who withhold their infant children from this sacred ordinance. It was originally prepared in the form of sermons to my own congregation; and therefore, as much as possible, adapted to the popular mind. Many of the arguments are such as every minister of the gospel is, or ought to be, familiar with. They have been gathered unhesitatingly, wherever I have found them during a period of many years; and have been so much incorporated with my own cogitations, that, to a considerable extent, I am unable to say which is borrowed and which is original. I have not, as I am aware, aimed at originality *for its own sake;* nor attempted it at all, except where my own thoughts seemed, if not better, at least *as well* suited to my general purpose as any others which I had at com-

mand. Nor have I thought it best to enlarge the volume by attempting to offer *all* the arguments on the subject which readily occur to mind, and which are believed to be sound and unanswerable; but have selected only such as appear to be best adapted to enlighten and convince the plain and candid reader.

The subject of Baptism, though a trite one, is still important on several accounts, and therefore entitled to grave and careful consideration. If, however, its discussion in the present work has any peculiar merits, they are believed to consist chiefly in the presentation of familiar arguments in a more than ordinarily clear and convincing light, and in the spirit of candor and kindness with which I have aimed to exhibit them.

It is true that many able works — volumes, pamphlets, and tracts — having in view the same general object contemplated in this, have been already issued from the press. But no one that I have seen appears to be quite what is required, to meet the wants of pastors and churches in gathering in the fruits of religious revivals— especially in communities where sentiments of an opposite cast have had considerable sway. The belligerent or caustic character which most of the publications on this subject bear, has seemed to me to render even those designed for popular use, and in which the argument is con-

clusive, highly objectionable as works to be put into the hands of recent converts; and, for the same reason, not well calculated to be extensively useful in relieving the doubts and correcting the erring faith of older Christians. And such as are not liable to this objection are, for the most part, wanting in that simplicity, clearness, and force of argument, and that condensed yet comprehensive treatment of the subject, which are required in a work of this kind, intended for general and permanent use. Whether the present little volume is, in these respects, any better adapted to the wants of the Church than others have been, remains to be seen. But, having hope that some good may come of it to the cause of truth and the kingdom of Christ, I now respectfully offer it to the public.

D. C.

Fredonia, January, 1854.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

INTRODUCTION, ... 11

CHAPTER I.

IMPORT OF THE WORD BAPTIZE.

Primary and classic sense. Derived or secondary sense. Scriptural use of the word. Argument from Mark 7: 1–5, and Luke 11: 38. Argument from John 1: 25. Argument from Heb. 9: 10. Argument from John 3: 22–26. 13

CHAPTER II.

DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

Not to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ. Examination of Rom. 6: 3–5, and Col. 2: 12. Illustration from 1 Cor. 2: 13, and Gal. 3: 27. Not to effect spiritual union with Christ. Adult converts spiritually united to Christ before baptism. Unconverted adults not spiritually changed by baptism. Simon Magus. Infants not spiritually renewed by baptism. Experience and observation. What its design is. Token and seal of the covenant. Symbol of spiritual purification. Initiatory rite. 30

CHAPTER III.

PAGE

MODE OF BAPTISM.

Example of Christ. Mode of Christ's baptism. Baptism of the eunuch. Baptism of the three thousand. Baptism of Saul. Baptism of the jailer and family. Baptism by the Spirit. Sprinkling of the blood of Christ. 52

CHAPTER IV.

INFANT BAPTISM—OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

First objection — The Scriptures require faith and repentance before baptism. *Second objection* — No Scripture precept enjoining infant baptism. *Third objection* — No Scripture example of infant baptism. 86

CHAPTER V.

INFANT BAPTISM — ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

The Church organized under the covenant made with Abraham. Infants included. The Christian Church a continuation of the same. The covenant still in force. Right to include her infant seed continued in the Christian Church, unless especially withdrawn. This right never withdrawn. Understanding of the Jewish converts. Silence of the unbelieving Jews. . . 111

CHAPTER VI.

INFANT BAPTISM — HISTORICAL ARGUMENT.

The Commission to baptize the nations. How the apostles must have understood it. Proselyte baptism. Baptism of households. Testimony of Justin Martyr—

PAGE.
Ireneus — Tertullian — Origen — Cyprian — Augustine — Pelagius. No record of the introduction of infant baptism. 150

CHAPTER VII.

INFANT BAPTISM—DIFFICULTIES EXPLAINED.

Is baptism an initiatory rite? Relation of baptized infants to the Church. Why not admitted to the Lord's Supper. Why not subject to Church discipline. Effect of infant baptism on the purity of the Church. Propriety of infant baptism. Rights of infants. Privilege and duty of Christian parents. 174

INTRODUCTION.

The risen Saviour stood with the eleven on the Mount of Olives. He was about to ascend into heaven to resume the glory which he had with the Father from eternity. He had completed the atoning sacrifice for men — had "magnified the law and made it honorable," — and had fully prepared the way for the proclamation of redeeming mercy to all the world. The legal dispensation had answered its purpose, and was terminated; and thenceforth the gospel — the good news of salvation by grace through faith — was to be more distinctly revealed, and made the animating principle of the Church. He therefore gave, as his last charge, the gracious commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

It is my design, in the following pages, to discuss the subject of Christian Baptism, with the view of showing, as clearly as I am able, what is intended by this com-

mand of the Saviour to *baptize all nations.* The course which I intend to pursue is,

I. To define and defend the true import of the word *baptize.*

II. Discuss the *object* or *design* of this rite.

III. With the help of what light may be obtained from the two preceding points, examine the question directly, What is the proper *mode* of baptism, as a rite of the Christian Church?

IV. Offer what I conceive to be a fair and sufficiently full investigation of the subject of *infant baptism.*

V. Solve some *questions* which often linger about and perplex many minds, in regard to infant baptism, even after the argument is settled.

It is hoped that such a range over the general subject of baptism as is here proposed, will be found, on the one hand, sufficiently comprehensive for ordinary readers, and on the other, not prove burdensome to any who feel interested in the subject. I will therefore proceed immediately to the discussion of these several topics in their order.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORT OF THE WORD BAPTIZE.

The unhappy differences in the Christian Church on the subject of Baptism depend, to a great extent, on the meanings assigned to the word *baptize*. If the honest inquirer after truth can be made to perceive clearly what is the just sense of this term, the way will then be prepared for him to apprehend readily the whole Bible doctrine of Baptism. I will therefore commence this discussion with the following question:—

What is the true and proper import of the word BAPTIZE?

Many candid and excellent men, as the reader knows, regard this word as meaning *plunge* or *immerse*, and *nothing else*. But from this view

I must, in the present discussion, dissent ; and affirm that the Greek word from which this is formed, and which Christ and his apostles employed to denote the administration of an ordinance in the Christian Church, has a *variety* of significations, depending on the circumstances in which it is used, and the subjects to which it is applied. When the Saviour instituted the sacrament of Christian baptism, he did not *create* the word by which it was to be called; but employed a term which was then, and had long been, in familiar use. The word *baptize* (βαπτιζω) was as old as the Greek language, and is therefore by no means confined, in its application, to this ordinance of the Christian Church. It was used freely to signify *immerse*, *overwhelm*, *wash*, *cleanse* or *purify*. It is needless to cite examples showing these several uses of the word. They encumber the pages of almost every book written in defence of sprinkling or pouring as a mode of baptism. And besides, it is of no consequence in this discussion, any farther than to prove its use in the last-mentioned sense, viz, *purify* or *cleanse ;* and in this sense I hope fully to demonstrate its use.

The *primary* or *original* meaning of the

word seems to have been *to plunge or immerse;* in which sense the *profane classic* writers generally employ it. The other meanings appear to have been derived from this by a natural law of association. Because the *effect* of immersing in water was commonly to wash, to cleanse or purify, the same word *baptize*, which was at first used to denote only the *mode* by which this effect was procured, came at length, by association, to be used also to represent simply *the procuring of this effect*, without any reference to the *mode* of doing it. Hence *baptism*, instead of always defining a specific *manner* of purifying, as by immersion, was, at a later period, also used *generically* to signify *the act of purifying*, irrespective of the *mode;* or purification by *any* mode whatever. *This is the sense*, as I hope to show, *in which the word is commonly, if not invariably, used by the inspired writers.* They seldom or never use it in the original classic sense, but in this derived and secondary sense.

Although it is possible, and perhaps probable, that, under the Old Testament dispensation, religious purifications, called sometimes in the Greek version *baptisms*, were often performed

by immersion; yet they were *baptisms*, not because they were *immersions*, but because they were *purifications*. In some cases, the washing of the whole body was required; and in others, only a sprinkling of the "water of purifying." But in no case was the purification imperatively required to be by immersion. When a general ablution of the body was called for, immersion, in some circumstances, might be the most convenient or agreeable method; and in many other circumstances, a more gradual process of washing from a small vessel would be most convenient. Either method met the requirement of the law. In either case it was accounted purification.

Purification was both external and internal. External purification was sometimes a physical cleansing, and sometimes merely a ceremonial act. Ceremonial purification was designed to be symbolical, either of internal moral purification, which consists in repentance, or a turning of the heart from sin to righteousness; or of spiritual purification by the Holy Ghost, which consists in sanctification, or deliverance from the defilement of sin;* or of legal purification, which

*I suppose that *moral* and *spiritual* purification are distinguished chiefly by regarding *the same effect* as produced by

consists in justification, or deliverance from liability to punishment for sin, and which always presupposes an atonement.

To enable the unprejudiced reader to see that the Greek word which we render *baptize*, as used by the writers of the New Testament, has the general sense of *purify*, *wash* or *cleanse*— and that, too, without regard to the *mode* of doing it — I think it will be only necessary that he examine with *care* and *candor* some passages of Scripture to which I will now invite his attention.

Let him look *first*, if he will, to Mark 7 : 1–5. "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they *wash*, (Greek, *baptize*,) they

human or *divine* agency. When the internal purification is considered in its relation to human agency, it is termed repentance, or *moral* purification; and when considered in its relation to divine agency, it is called sanctification, or *spiritual* purification.

eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (Gr. *baptizing*) of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?" Now, what is the general idea running through this passage? Is it not plainly the following? — The Jews, at this time, were very particular in observing the custom, according to the tradition of the elders, of *purifying* themselves before taking their meals. And these Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem were displeased, and complained to Christ, when they saw this custom departed from by some of his disciples. It was their standing practice to wash their hands before eating; and 'when they returned from the market, except they washed they ate not.' When the washing of their hands is spoken of, the Greek word here employed for "wash" is νιπτο, *nipto* — a word that *never* defines the *manner* of washing, but permits it to be done in any way. This no one will dispute. And when they are said to wash on returning from market, and to wash their "cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables," the ori-

ginal word for "wash" is βαπτιζω, *baptizo*. Here the two words seem to be used as meaning the same thing, and are accordingly both translated by the English word *wash*. But if *nipto* and *baptizo* do here mean the same thing, then *baptizo* in this place means simply to wash or purify, because *nipto* never means any thing else.

But if it is contended that the two words do not here mean the same thing, but that there is an *extension* of the idea, in passing from the *washing* on ordinary occasions to the *baptizing* after returning from market, — I answer, If it were proved that there is this extension of the idea, it would not follow that the baptism here spoken of was necessarily by immersion. The most that it would imply is that, after returning from market, a *more general* and *thorough* ablution of the body was had than was required on ordinary occasions. But this more general washing was simply for the purpose of thorough *purification;* and consequently this *baptism* was simply a *purification* — as truly so as the washing of the hands. But this supposed change, or extension of the idea, in passing from the one word to the other, is mere conjecture — it is

not proved, and cannot be. The evangelist, in recording this complaint of the Pharisees and scribes, takes occasion to speak of the general custom of the Jews on the subject of *purifying* themselves before taking their meals; and states what that custom is on common occasions, and what it is when they have been to market. But the idea of purifying is the only one introduced, with *perhaps* the different degrees of thoroughness required on the different occasions. This is evident from the public declaration which the Saviour made on this very occasion. Verse 15, "There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things that come out of him, these are they that defile the man." Their custom of washing or baptizing before eating was founded on the supposition that they might possibly have touched something which, by the ceremonial law, was accounted unclean; and by handling their food in that state they might pollute it, and so defile themselves, by eating that which was unclean. Hence they purified themselves before eating. This is evidently the meaning, and the only meaning of their washing or baptizing at such times. A similar complaint against the

Saviour himself was made by a Pharisee who had invited Christ to eat in his house, as mentioned in Luke 11 : 38. The passage, with the connection, is as follows : "And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed (Gr. baptized) before dinner." Now, suppose the Saviour, before eating, had taken a small vessel of water, and, with a towel, had proceeded to *wash* himself *thoroughly* — all over, if you please — it would not have been *immersion* at all; and yet, does any candid mind think that the Pharisee, in that case, would have marvelled that Jesus did not get into a bathing-tub and immerse himself? Was it *immersion* or *purification* that the Pharisee required? Manifestly the latter, although it is called by the evangelist *baptism.* The Pharisee "marvelled that he had not first *baptized* before dinner." But, that purifying or cleansing was the idea involved is evident from what the Saviour says in reply. "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees MAKE CLEAN the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness."

It was the fact that he had not first MADE CLEAN or PURIFIED himself that the Pharisee complained of. But "baptized" is the original word which Luke employs to express this idea. This shows in what sense he uses the term. Immersion would indeed have answered the purpose of the Pharisee; and so would anything else by which purification should have been effected. The word "baptized" in this place has clearly no reference to the *mode*, but only to the *effect;* and is synonymous with *cleansed* or *purified.* The same is true in the case above mentioned, where the disciples were complained of in a similar way. And when the Jews, as above, are said to hold the custom of washing (baptizing) "cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and tables," or dining couches, (for all agree that this is what is meant by κλινῶν, the word rendered "tables" — couches on which they reclined at meals,) it is preposterous to suppose that immersion is here the essential idea of baptism; or that the word conveys any other idea than purification. Who can believe, from the mere use of this word in such a connection — and is there other evidence? — that the Jews were accustomed, before every meal, to *immerse* their *couches*, as well as

their cooking utensils and table furniture; and that, too, for the sake of the *manner* of doing it rather than the *effect?* It was plainly a ceremonial purification, and might be performed by washing in any way, or by sprinkling, which was a common mode of purifying under the law. The baptism of their couches was most probably performed by sprinkling. No one, it seems to me, who has not a theory to support, can believe it was done by immersion. And these cases illustrate the meaning of the word *baptize* as used by these inspired writers. It is *purify* or *cleanse* — denoting simply the *procuring of an effect;* and that without regard to the *mode* of doing it.

That this is the true meaning of the word, as used by the evangelists, is further evident from the question put to John the Baptist, (John 1: 25,) when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He having denied that he was the Christ, or the literal Elias, or any one of the old prophets returned, they ask him, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" This shows that there was an expectation among them that Christ, when he should come, would *bap-*

tize. But was there anything in the prophecies concerning Christ to awaken the expectation that he would *immerse*, or be an *immerser?* Not one word. Why, then, should it have been expected that he would *baptize?* And why should it have been suspected that John must be the Christ from the fact that he baptized? The reason is plain. It was distinctly declared (Mal. 3: 23,) that Christ or Messiah should *purify;* and this was therefore expected of him. As to what would be the nature of his purifying, their ideas were vague and confused. But as soon as John appeared, officially baptizing, and administering the rite to many of the priests and Levites, as well as others, they at once thought they perceived in him the predicted "purifier." Baptism was understood to mean purification. A great purifier had appeared, who, according to prophecy, was 'purifying the sons of Levi;' and they readily imagined that this must be the Christ. On no other principle can it be accounted for, that John's baptizing should have been taken as an indication of his being the Christ, than that baptism was understood to be purification, and they knew Christ was to come as a purifier. This shows the

meaning of the word *baptize*, as it was religiously used among the Jews in the time of John. It was not immerse, or sprinkle, or pour, or anything else which described a particular *mode* of doing a thing; but *purify*, having no regard whatever to the mode. And the term *baptism* was used to denote any and every sort of religious purification, whether ceremonial, moral, spiritual, or legal—that is, sacrificial. In speaking of the baptism of John, the word is used to denote the ceremonial purification with water, and also the moral purification of repentance. In repentance, the sinner withdraws his mind from the pollution of sin, and turns it to righteousness and purity. Hence it is moral purification. John preached the baptism of repentance — in other words, the purification of repentance. He preached that men should repent, and thus purify themselves in their moral affections. And as a sign of this moral purification which they professed, he administered the ceremonial purification with water. Water baptism, considered as ceremonial *purification*, is strikingly emblematical of repentance, which is moral purification. But baptism, considered as *immersion*, or anything else which denotes *mode*, can-

not, with any degree of fitness, represent repentance; because there is nothing about repentance which resembles the *mode* of immersion, or of sprinkling, or of pouring. It is not, then, the *manner* or *mode* of doing the thing which constitutes religious baptism; but the *procuring of a certain effect*, viz. *purification*. Any process by which purification is effected is *baptism*, in the religious sense of the term.

In Heb. 9: 10, the apostle calls the various purifications under the law "divers baptisms." "Divers washings" it is in our translation; but in the original Greek, the word for "washings" is, literally rendered, "*baptisms*." In this chapter he labors to show his Jewish brethren that the Mosaic ritual could not take away sin, or produce real purity of heart and conscience, but afforded only an outward purification of the flesh; while the application of Christ's blood, of which these "divers baptisms" were emblematical, was able to effect a true cleansing — a purifying of the conscience and heart—a deliverance from sin and condemnation. In the 10th verse he states, in general terms, in what the tabernacle service consisted. It "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers baptisms, and carnal ordinances."

Then, in the 13th verse, he adverts again to this service more in detail, and shows what he meant by the "divers baptisms." "For," says he, "if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the *purifying* of the flesh," &c. The "*divers baptisms*," then, were divers *purifyings*, performed by "sprinkling the unclean" with "the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer."

The reader will permit me to offer one more passage in proof of the fact that the sacred writers use the term *baptize* in the sense of *purify*. It is in John 3 : 22–26. While John was baptizing in Enon, Jesus with his disciples came into Judea and baptized. This was by some regarded as indicating a sort of rivalry between John and Jesus. Some of John's disciples appear to have felt a little jealously of Jesus, as if he were trespassing on the prerogatives of their master; and they fell into a dispute with certain Jews on the subject, which they referred to John to settle. The account of the matter is in these words. "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized. And

John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized: for John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews *about* purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." John immediately acknowledges the superiority of Christ, and thus settles the question. Now, it is perfectly manifest, on the face of the narrative, that this was a dispute growing out of the rival claims set up for John and Jesus, by their respective adherents, touching the right to baptize. It was in fact a question about baptizing; and yet the evangelist calls it "a question about purifying." This, I think, makes it abundantly evident that he uses the terms *baptizing* and *purifying* interchangably, as meaning the same thing. Any process of purifying, therefore, is baptizing; because the Greek word καθαρισμὸς, here translated "purifying," is never restricted to any particular *mode*. The *mode* of purifying is always to be determined by some accompanying term or terms, and not by the word *purify*

(καθαρίζω) itself. And since *baptize* is used as a synonym of *purify*, it is manifestly improper to ascribe to it the specific and modal sense of immerse, or pour, or sprinkle. Its meaning is more general, and regards simply an *effect* which either of these modes may procure. Purify is its most exact definition.

CHAPTER II.

DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

What is the true OBJECT *or* DESIGN *of Christian baptism?* It is doubtless owing, in a great degree, to a want of accurate understanding on this point, that so much difference exists among evangelical Christians in regard to this ordinance. If I could be sure of fixing in the reader's mind correct ideas of the *design* of baptism, I should feel little concern in respect to his views of the *mode*, or the proper *subjects* of the rite. But let me do what I can to this end.

The belief is extensively entertained that one main design of baptism is *to symbolize and commemorate the burial and resurrection of Christ.* This, in my opinion, is a radical error, and ought to be corrected. The Bible nowhere teaches that such is the main design, or any design at all of baptism. There are, however, two passages of Scripture which, by many, are thought to sustain this view, and which it is proper here to

examine. The first is in Rom. 6 : 3–5. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him, by baptism, into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Now, I think that a careful and impartial examination of this passage will convince us that, by the baptism here spoken of is not meant the baptism of *water*, but that *spiritual* baptism, or purification, by which the heart is renewed, and the believer becomes dead to sin and alive to righteousness. The connection of the passage shows that the object of the apostle is to declare what must be the moral effect of justification by grace through faith in Christ. In the preceding chapters of this epistle, he had clearly taught this doctrine of justification by grace, in opposition to the Jewish idea of justification by the works of the law; and had sustained his position by the most cogent argumentation. But now he anticipates an objection that would naturally arise in many minds, espe-

cially in such as were exposed to the influence of Judaizing teachers. The objection is, that this doctrine would lead to laxity of morals — that, if it be true that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound," then men may feel at liberty to live in sin, since they thereby furnish opportunity for the exercise of the more grace. "What shall we say then?" he asks. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And here he proceeds to reply to this objection, in the passage before us, by urging our *baptism into Christ* as a guaranty against such perversion of grace. "God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him, by baptism, into death;" — plainly meaning *death to sin*. By our spiritual purification, or baptism into Christ, we so sympathize with him as to die *unto* sin as he died *for* sin. Thus we are said to be "baptized [purified] into his death." The baptism or purification of which the apostle here speaks is one that produces death to sin; so as to furnish a perfect answer to the above objection raised against salvation

by grace. But baptism with water produces no such death to sin. And the objection against salvation by grace through faith, that it must tend to licentiousness of manners, receives no refutation from the fact of our baptism, if *water* baptism be meant. And yet, the apostle here offers our *baptism* as the security against this otherwise dangerous tendency. But if *spiritual* baptism, or purification of *heart* be meant, then the argument of the apostle is perfectly conclusive, and the objection is thoroughly answered. Our baptism produces death to sin, and "how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" We are "buried into death" to sin by our spiritual baptism; and of course it is fair to conclude that 'sin shall not henceforth have dominion over us.' "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In this expression the apostle shows what baptism he is speaking of. It is a baptism which produces death to sin, and a subsequent "walk in newness of life." But every one knows that the outward ordinance of water baptism produces no such change in the lives of men, and that spiritual baptism does; because it is a puri-

fication of the fountain of moral action — the heart. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The word here translated "planted together" (σύμφυτοι) is one that is used to express the situation of young trees or plants which have been so planted or set as to sprout and grow together; and therefore it involves the idea of *intimate union.* It is here used figuratively, to signify our union with Christ, or conformity to the likeness of Christ, in respect to his death — being ourselves dead to sin; so that, as he arose from death, like the planted seed which sprouts and grows again, we also in like manner shall arise to a new and holy life. Thus we are associated with Christ both in death and resurrection, like seeds planted together, and sprouting and growing together. And the argument is that, *if* we are thus associated with him in death, by virtue of our baptism — our spiritual purification — then we shall also be similarly associated with him in a resurrection to a new life; and hence cannot "continue in sin." The succeeding context carries out this same idea, showing plainly as language can, that what the apostle endeavors to establish

is the fact that, *in our baptism*, whatever its mode, we become, in comparison with our former state, dead to sin and alive to righteousness. But this is not true at all of the outward ordinance of water baptism, as all experience proves; and yet it is eminently true of spiritual baptism, or purification by the Holy Ghost. To my own mind, therefore, it is clear that this passage has nothing to do with teaching the design of water baptism; and much less does it teach anything in relation to the mode of administering it. It says indeed that "we are buried with him, by baptism, into death;" but it is by spiritual baptism — purification of the heart by the Holy Spirit — that we are buried into *death to sin*. And hence, as Christ was raised from the dead and lives again, so we also who have received this spiritual baptism shall "walk in newness of life." This is evidently what the passage teaches; and this is the whole of it. It gives not the remotest intimation that our baptism with water is designed to commemorate the burial and resurrection of Christ, or to symbolize that event, or even to express our faith in it. It is true that the *fact* of our baptism with water does declare our faith in the death, burial, and

resurrection of Christ, as also in *all* that he has done to save men, — not especially in one thing more than another; — but the *manner* or *mode* of our baptism does not; nor is that mode at all indicated in this passage. The apostle does not, in this place, indicate either the mode or the design of water baptism; and for the plain reason that he says nothing about it.

Now let us look at the passage again, substituting the word *purify* for *baptize*, and we shall see its fitness and force. "Know ye not that so many of us as were purified into Jesus Christ,* were purified into his death? [If we are thus spiritually joined to Christ, we are spiritually joined to his death.] Therefore we are buried with him by [our spiritual] purification, into death [to sin]; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old

* This form of expression, "purified into Christ," seems to be used because, in spiritual purification, we are brought into spiritual *union* with Christ, as branches engrafted into a living vine; hence, "purified into Christ."

man is crucified with him [by our spiritual baptism or purification,] that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Here we see that the whole drift of this passage is, not to teach what water baptism is intended to signify, nor how it should be administered; but to show how our spiritual baptism operates to produce death to sin, and a new life of holiness; and thus obviate the objection to salvation by grace through faith, viz. that it must give license to sin.

If it be said, as it often is, that in our baptism with water, we *profess* death to sin, and *promise* a new life of holiness, I admit it; but that this is what Paul means in the passage which we have been considering cannot be admitted. Such an interpretation would destroy the entire force of the apostle's argument. How does it answer the objection that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ must give license to sin, by saying that, when we are baptized with water, we *profess* to be dead to sin, and *promise* to live lives of holy obedience? Who does not know that professions are often false, and promises often broken? And is it to be supposed that the great apostle, after having shown such masterly power of argument

in all his epistle up to this very point, would here broach an apparently formidable objection to his doctrine, and then offer to it such a flimsy reply — merely saying that when we are baptized, we *profess* to die unto sin and live unto righteousness? Or again, does he speak of this objection only for the sake of founding upon it an *exhortation* to Christians, to 'let not sin reign in their mortal bodies'? If so, then he does not pretend to answer it at all; but merely *states* the objection, and there leaves it unanswered, to perplex and worry his readers — simply telling Christians that they have *professed*, in baptism, to shun the evil which he mentions as seeming to result so naturally from his doctrine, and *exhorting* them to be true to their profession! Is this like Paul? Does he usually meet difficulties in doctrine with such evasion? And why ascribe it to him now? Not certainly because there is any necessity for it, only for the sake of maintaining what, at best, must be regarded as a doubtful exegesis. Let it be understood that the apostle speaks here, not of water baptism, but of spiritual baptism, or the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and then he speaks like himself, under divine inspiration; and his argument

is full, and clear, and conclusive. I do not, therefore, hesitate to say that, in my opinion, this is the baptism of which he speaks, and this is the sense of the passage under consideration.

The other passage referred to is in Col. 2 : 12, and is evidently intended to be parallel to the one just examined, only less full. The expression, "buried with him in baptism," must receive the same interpretation. By being "buried with him" is meant, not buried in water, but buried to sin. The true believer is, in relation to sin, *in a comparative sense*, like one dead and buried. I say, *in a comparative sense;* because it is not true *absolutely*, but only in comparison with the state in which he was before his spiritual baptism. Sin does not any longer control him. He has renounced it, put it away, and is, in a measure, dead to its charms. And by being "risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God," is meant, not risen from under the water, but risen to a "newness of life" in Christ. That the burial and resurrection of the believer here spoken of, mean a burial to sin and resurrection to a new and holy life, rather than a burial in water and resurrection from under water, is plain from the connection. Let me give the

passage, with the verse before and after it. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." By "the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," is evidently meant regeneration by the Spirit of God. This is spiritual purification. Circumcision was clearly regarded as a kind of purifying ordinance; and hence spiritual purification or regeneration is figuratively called "circumcision made without hands." With this circumcision, believers are here said to be circumcised in Christ; and this idea the apostle presses by saying that, "in baptism," or spiritual purification, previously called "circumcision made without hands," they are so far crucified to sin and delivered from its power, that they may properly be said to be "buried with him," and with him "risen" to a new life,

through faith in the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead. The general idea is precisely the same as that in Romans; and in neither place do I think the apostle gives any instruction on the subject of water baptism, either as to its *design* or *mode of administration;* but refers entirely to spiritual baptism, or purification by the Holy Ghost, and which he also calls "the circumcision made without hands," and "the circumcision of Christ."

This exposition is fortified by the fact that the same apostle repeatedly uses the word *baptize* in the sense which I have here supposed. For example; in 1 Cor. 12: 13, he says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." To be "baptized into one body" is evidently to be, by baptism, joined into one body. But it is not true that all who receive water baptism are joined into one body — certainly not into one spiritual body, which is doubtless the thing intended. Or, if it be alleged that by "one body" is meant one visible body, as the visible church, then I reply, This interpretation would make *another* clause of the passage a falsehood; be-

cause, not all the visible church "have been made to drink into one Spirit," as their wide and antagonistic diversities of conduct and character too sadly testify. No, he refers to a baptism by which all who receive it are joined "into one body, and all made to drink into one Spirit." He cannot therefore mean water baptism, for such is not the effect of water baptism; but he must mean spiritual baptism, of which such is the natural and necessary effect. And indeed he says he means spiritual baptism. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized," &c. The word *Spirit* here plainly denotes the agent by whom the baptism is effected, and can only refer to the Holy Spirit. What the apostle therefore affirms of all true Christians is, that they are all baptized by one and the same Holy Spirit; and of course he refers to spiritual baptism, and not baptism with water.

There is another passage in Gal. 3 : 27, where this apostle uses the very same expression as in the disputed passage in Rom. 6 : 3–5, "baptized into Christ," and where he *cannot* refer to baptism with water, but must mean spiritual baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Why

does he say, "As MANY OF YOU as have been baptized into Christ," if he meant it of water baptism? He was addressing the churches of Galatia, whose members had doubtless *all* been baptized with water. But his remark plainly implies that *not* all of them had certainly been "baptized into Christ," as he uses the word. His reference was therefore not to water, but spiritual baptism. And this construction of the term is forced upon us by the necessity of the case, unless we would make the apostle affirm what every one knows to be false, when he says, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Who has yet to learn that this is not true in respect to water baptism? And yet it is emphatically true of spiritual baptism. He must therefore have reference to the latter, and cannot refer to the former. And this construction is made still more invulnerable by what he says of the same class of persons in the verse next preceding. "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ." But who will dare to say that all who have been baptized with water are "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ"? Certainly not my brethren who think that to be "buried with Christ in baptism" means to be

buried in the water. Neither do I. And what then does the apostle mean by saying that "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"? To what baptism does he refer? Water baptism, as the reader must perceive, it cannot be; spiritual baptism it must be—the baptism, or purification of the heart, by the Holy Spirit, through faith.

But if the apostle is so in the habit of using the word *baptize* in this spiritual sense, then there is nothing constrained or unnatural in giving it the same sense in those passages in Rom. and Col. which we have been considering. And if he uses the phrase "BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST," here in Galatians, to signify *united to Christ by spiritual baptism* — by purification of the heart through faith — it is certainly reasonable to conclude that he uses the very same language in the same sense in Rom. 6: 3, where he says that "so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST, were baptized into his death." And if he *here* refers, not to water baptism, but to spiritual — as he does by the same expression in Galatians—then he must also mean spiritual baptism in the next verse, when he says, "we are buried with him, by baptism, into death." And

if he means spiritual baptism here, he does unquestionably mean the same thing in the parallel passage in Col. 2 : 12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead."

I believe, therefore, that all the support which these celebrated passages have been supposed to give to the doctrine, that the sacrament of baptism in the Christian Church is designed to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, is a total mistake — that it results from an entire misapprehension of the apostle's language. It appears to me perfectly plain that he does not, in these passages, speak of water baptism at all; and consequently gives no intimation as to the proper design of this ordinance, or mode of administering it; but on the contrary, confines the idea to spiritual baptism — purification by the Holy Spirit — and the moral effect of this work in producing death to sin and life to righteousness.

But if these passages (Rom. 6 : 3–5, and Col. 2 : 12,) do not teach that the design of water baptism in the Church is to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, then this doctrine is

certainly not taught in the Bible, and ought to be given up. There are no other Scripture passages to be relied on by its advocates, when these fail them. In truth, there was no separate ordinance given to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ; nor was any needed, since these events were so closely connected with his death, which is represented in the sacred Supper.

Having now shown, and as I trust conclusively, that it is no part of the design of water baptism, to represent or commemorate the burial and resurrection of Christ, I observe, in the next place, that many suppose water baptism to be *a sacrament, by means of which the subject of it becomes a partaker of those spiritual graces which characterize the adopted children of God; and that, consequently, the design of it is to introduce us into the spiritual family of God, and thus make us heirs of salvation.* The objection to this doctrine arises chiefly from the fact that it is *not true.* It is not true as applied to the baptism of either *adults* or *infants.*

1. It is not true as applied to the baptism of *adults.* These, as every Bible reader knows, are never baptized by scriptural authority until

after they are supposed to have become united to Christ, and consequently to the spiritual family of God, by repentance and faith. And being in the exercise of "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," they are thus partakers of the spiritual graces which characterize the children of God; and that, too, before their baptism, and as a prerequisite to their baptism. And if they may not be baptized with water until *after* they are supposed to have entered the spiritual family of God by the moral baptism of repentance and the affiliating exercise of faith in Christ, then water baptism certainly cannot be designed to *introduce* them into this spiritual family. And if, in any case, water baptism be administered to a man who had not already become a child of God by faith, this ordinance does not make him such, by whatever hands administered. Simon Magus was baptized while in his natural state of estrangement from God, having only yielded an intellectual assent to Christianity, without the faith of the heart; and Peter, under inspiration, declared him to be without part or lot in the religion of Christ, and "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity."

2. Neither is baptism, as administered to *infants*, designed to introduce them into God's spiritual family, and make them heirs of salvation. Whatever the Saviour designed it for, it doubtless answers that design. But the melancholy fact is apparent to all, that not a few baptized infants grow up to maturity without evincing any of the distinguishing traits of Christian character; but, on the contrary, maintaining the worst propensities of their nature unchecked, and practically showing, to the last of life, an unyielding aversion to Christ and his cause. Their being baptized, therefore, does not make them Christians, in any proper sense of the term. It does not make them partakers of spiritual life in Christ, or in any degree change the moral state of their souls. Baptized children, as I hope hereafter to show, may derive great spiritual benefit from the fact of their baptism; and hence it is immensely important to them. But, whatever its effect may be, it is not to renew their moral nature, and constitute them spiritually the children of God. The idea of effecting spiritual regeneration, whether in adults or infants, through the outward ordinance of baptism, so as to induce in them the exercise of

Christian graces, and bring them into saving relation to Christ, is so far from finding any legitimate support in the Bible, and so glaringly opposed to experience and observation, that it seems mysterious how men of sense and candor can believe or teach it. And yet they do, or something very like it. But I will only add, I am sorry for them.

I will now state, in brief, what I suppose to be the true object or design of this ordinance.

And *first*, the ordinance of baptism is, as I suppose, designed to be *a visible sign or token upon him who receives it, showing that he is in covenant relation to God.* The covenant in which he stands with God pledges him to walk before the Lord in a holy life, and also pledges the Lord to be his God. And baptism is the *token* of this covenant. It is also the ratifying *seal* of the covenant — closing the engagement between the parties, and standing as a perpetual witness to the obligation confessed. This view of the design of baptism is derived mainly from its analogy to circumcision, and from the perpetuity of the covenant with Abraham — topics which I intend to discuss in a subsequent chapter.

A *second* design of water baptism is *to represent symbolically that internal purification of the soul which takes place in regeneration, or true conversion to Christ;* whether considered in its aspect of moral purification by repentance, or spiritual purification by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, or sacrificial, that is, legal purification by the application of Christ's atoning blood. Viewed in either of these aspects, this internal purification is meant to be represented to the eye of sense by the outward ordinance of water purification, or baptism. That baptism is thus designed to be significant of internal purification is, I think, admitted by nearly or quite all classes of evangelical Christians, whatever *other* designs they may believe it to have. I need not therefore argue this point.

In the *third* place, baptism is designed as *the rite of initiation into the visible Church of Christ;* so that whoever properly receives the ordinance of baptism becomes thereby, in some sense at least, a member of the visible Church on earth. This also is but seldom disputed, and may pass without further remark in this place, although it will be appropriately discussed in the closing chapter of this work.

These are my views, summarily expressed, as to what is the true intent of Christian baptism. I do not attempt now to argue them at all, because, as I have said, the *third* will be adverted to again in the closing chapter, while the *second* is generally admitted, and the *first* will naturally be considered in the chapter on the Abrahamic covenant.

CHAPTER III.

MODE OF BAPTISM.

In the preceding chapters, I have endeavored to make plain to my readers the two points respecting the *import* of the word *baptize*, and the *design* of baptism. In the first chapter it was shown that, although the earlier use of the word *baptize*, or rather of the Greek *baptizo*, was to signify the *mode* of an action, as immerse, plunge, or overwhelm, and it is generally employed in this sense by the *profane classic* writers; yet it gradually acquired, by a natural law of association, another sense, denoting not the *mode* of the action, but the *effect procured* by the action. As the natural effect of immersion in clean water was to purify, the word *baptize* came at length to signify *cleanse* or *purify*. And at the time when the New Testament was written, as also when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, this word was used in both the original sense of *immerse*, and the derived

and secondary sense of *purify*. I endeavored to show from the Scriptures, and I think successfully, that the sacred writers adopted the latter signification, and used the term in the sense of *purify*, without any regard to the mode of doing it.

In the second chapter, it was shown that the *design* of baptism is not, as many suppose, to symbolize or commemorate *the burial and resurrection of Christ* — that this is no part of its design; nor was there any occasion for a separate ordinance to commemorate those events, since they were so closely connected with his *death*, which is commemorated in the sacred Supper. Nor, again, is it the design of baptism, as was shown, *to introduce the subjects of it into the spiritual family of God, and make them partakers of those spiritual graces which belong peculiarly to God's adopted children.*

But it was claimed that baptism with water is designed as a *sign* or *token* of the covenant entered into between God and the baptized person, and to be the *seal* of that covenant — ratifying the engagement, and standing as a perpetual witness to the obligation therein acknowledged; also that it is designed to represent

internal purification from sin by the action of divine grace, and to be the rite of initiation into the visible Church.

We are now prepared to examine the question in the present chapter, *What is the proper* MODE *of baptism, as a rite of the Christian Church?*

And here I take the position that, *any form of ceremonial purification with water, when administered by an authorized person to a proper subject, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is valid Christian baptism.* This position would be readily admitted by the great body of professed Christians throughout the world. But there is, as every one knows, a not inconsiderable and very respectable class of Christians, who contend that *immersion* is the only allowable or valid mode of administering Christian baptism. I have no occasion or desire to dispute the validity of that mode; but only to repel and disprove the assertion that the ordinance cannot be valid unless administered in that way. If this assertion shall be shown to be erroneous, then it will follow that *other* modes, as sprinkling or pouring, may be lawfully adopted. My main attempt, therefore, in the present chapter, will be to

show that there is no scriptural authority for affirming that Christian baptism can be performed only by immersion.

They who insist on immersion as the only true mode of baptism, usually do so under the belief that *immerse*, and *only* immerse, is what the word *baptize* means — that this is the *essential idea* of *baptize* — that the Greek word from which this is formed has no other signification; — certainly not in relation to this ordinance of the Church. But we have seen that this is a total mistake. I feel assured that the unprejudiced reader, who has perused the first chapter of this book with care, so as fully to comprehend the argument, must perceive that the true *scriptural* idea of *baptize* is *purify*, by whatever mode. The *meaning of the word*, therefore, does not restrict us to any particular mode; but leaves entirely open the question of *mode*, to be determined by other considerations.

The next main reliance of our brethren who contend for immersion exclusively, so far at least as I am acquainted, is on what they suppose to be *the example of Christ*. And the sensitive conscience of the young convert is pressed with the imposing appeal to "follow the example of

the Saviour," and be "buried with Christ in baptism."

Now, there are three things which truth, as I think, requires to be said in regard to this matter, and which give it a very different complexion from what it wears with the advocates of immersion.

1. The Bible nowhere teaches that Christ was "buried in baptism." The nearest thing to it is where it says nothing about it; viz. in those passages (Rom. 6: 4, and Col. 2: 12,) which were discussed in Chapter II. The apostle, it is true, teaches us, in these passages, that *Christians* are, in their spiritual baptism, become dead and buried *unto sin*, as Christ died and was buried *on account of sin:* and that, as Jesus was raised from the dead, even so we also are risen with him to a new life of holiness. "For how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Hence we are said to be, in our baptism — meaning our spiritual purification — "buried with him," and "buried with him, by baptism, into death" — death to sin. But all this has noting to do with the water baptism of Christ, or of believers in him.

2. The baptism of Christ was not intended as

an example for our baptism, nor does it at all indicate the true mode of baptism in the Christian Church. We know it was not administered according to the instruction which he has given to the Church, because it was not administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Christ was baptized by John the baptist, who did not administer the ordinance in the name of the Trinity, as appears in Acts 19: 2, where we are told of certain believers who had received John's baptism, but yet had never heard of the Holy Ghost; — a fact which could not have been, had they been baptized in his name. It is certain, then, that Christ did not intend the *form* and *manner* of his baptism as an example for us; because it materially differed in form from what he has commanded us — not being administered in the name of the Trinity.

Nor, again, did he intend the *fact* of his baptism as an example for us; and we are to be baptized, not because Christ was baptized, but because he has *commanded* us to be. The baptism of Christ was doubtless intended as a part of his external consecration to the priestly office, which he was then about to commence exerci-

sing for men. He had now reached the age of thirty years, as was required by the divine law before one should enter upon the sacerdotal duties. He therefore came to John, who was himself a priest, the son of Zacharias the priest, and demanded baptism, or the ceremonial purification which the law required in the consecration of priests. John was surprised, and hesitated to comply; saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" Jesus replied, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." But what demand of righteousness required Jesus to be baptized? It was not required to symbolize any professed repentance on his part, as in the case of others whom John baptized; for he had no sin, and needed no repentance, nor did he profess any. It could not, as in us, be intended to represent his spiritual purification by the Holy Ghost, for he was always spiritually pure. What righteousness, then, did it become him to fulfil by baptism? Plainly, obedience to God's righteous law. He was now about to commence his services as a priest to instruct and atone for the people of God. And the law required that, on entering

upon his office, the priest should be ceremonially purified. And Christ would honor the law by submitting to the ceremony, and thus forestall the opposition of jealous and envious men. The advantage which this compliance with the law gave him was afterwards seen, (Matt. 21: 23–27,) when the chief priests and elders came to him, and demanded of him by what authority he instructed the people and performed his works of mercy. The reader will remember how thoroughly he silenced them by referring them to the baptism of John, and asking them whether they acknowledged the divine authority of that. He knew they dared not deny it; and yet, if they admitted it, they would thus be compelled to acknowledge the divine authority of his own sacerdotal acts; because he could at once turn upon them and say, 'John, acting by divine authority, as you acknowledge, consecrated me to the priesthood of the Messiah; so, there is my authority, at least sufficiently to answer you.'

This, then, was the design of Christ's baptism — not to be an example for us, but to introduce him regularly to the priestly office. Whatever, therefore, was the *form* or *mode* of his baptism, it is not to be urged as obliging us to be baptized

in the same way. The baptism of the Christian church was instituted *after* that, and for an entirely different purpose.

3. There is no evidence that Christ was baptized by immersion; but rather that it was by sprinkling, or possibly by pouring. What, let me ask, is the argument by which men attempt to prove the immersion of Christ? Apart from the meaning of the word *baptize*, which, as to *mode*, we have seen to be no evidence at all; and those passages in Romans and Colossians, which, as we have seen, do not touch the question; I do not remember to have met with any other argument for Christ's immersion than such as I will now consider.

(1.) In the language of our English translation, after Christ was baptized in Jordan, he is said to have come "up out of the water." The supposed proof here is in the words "*out of.*" 'Why should he be said to have come up *out of* the water, unless he had been immersed in the water?' And, really, is there no other way of getting into the water, but to be *immersed* in it? and no other way by which one may come "up out of the water," but by ascending from a total submersion in it? What if the Bible had distinct-

ly said that John baptized by sprinkling or pouring; and that, for convenience and comfort in that hot climate, John stood at the margin of the water, with his face towards the stream; and the multitudes passed around in front of him in single file — thus stepping into the edge of the water — while he sprinkled, or poured from a cup, the water upon them; and then, having been thus baptized, they passed on "up out of the water" to the top of the bank: I ask, What if the Bible had described the mode of John's baptizing just in this manner? Would the account of Christ's baptism, in that case, have required the employment of different phraseology from what is actually employed? Might it not have been said then, just as now, that "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water?" The reader may here see how much soundness of argument there is in supposing that, because Christ came "up out of the water," he must certainly have been immersed! It may not be amiss to add, that many remains of ancient sculpture represent John as baptizing in the very way which I have here described. I do not say that this was the precise form, for we are not told how it was done; but I do say

that the language of the sacred narrative is quite as favorable to such a form of baptism by John as to immersion; and it is much more probably true, for reasons which I will presently give.

But it should not be omitted, that this argument for Christ's immersion, drawn from the phrase "up out of the water," is peculiar to readers of the English Bible only. It is seldom, if ever, urged by one who reads the original Greek. Every such person knows there is nothing in it. The Greek word which is here translated "out of" (*apo*) more properly signifies *from* than *out of*, and is more commonly so translated. If, in this place, the translation had been made to read, "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water," no one would ever have thought of calling it an incorrect rendering; nor would any one, in that case, have thought of finding here an argument for Christ's immersion. The use of the words *out of* instead of *from* proves nothing at all.

(2.) But Christ, it is said, was doubtless baptized in the same form as others in John's baptism; and if John did not baptize by immersion, why did he go to the river Jordan, and to "Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water

there"? I am very ready to admit that Christ was probably baptized in the same form as others in John's baptism; and yet I see no necessity for supposing he was immersed, or that John immersed any one. The ministry of John was attended by vast multitudes, many of whom came from a great distance, and doubtless with their beasts of burden. And on the supposition that he baptized by sprinkling or pouring, it must have been very convenient, to say the least, to select a location where the immense throng, with all their beasts might be comfortably supplied with an article so necessary in a hot climate as water. This is certainly reason enough why he should have selected such locations, without supposing he baptized by immersion. No argument, therefore, can be drawn, from the fact that John selected such places for his baptizing, in favor of the idea that he immersed his disciples. The most that it would prove in that direction is, that he *could* have immersed if he had seen fit;—at least, he had water enough. But it also proves as well, that he could have *sprinkled* or *poured;* and although, in that case, he might not have needed so much water for the administration of baptism, yet he

would have needed it for the convenient accommodation of the immense crowds of people, with their thirsty animals.

We have, then, no real evidence that John ever immersed any one. There is none in the meaning of the word *baptize;* there is none in the proper design of Christian baptism; there is none in the language of our translation, stating that Jesus, when he was baptized, "went up straightway out of the water;" and there is none in the selection of Jordan and Enon as the places for administering his baptism. Not one of these things, as the reader must plainly perceive, affords the slightest evidence that he immersed, any more than that he sprinkled or poured. Not one of them makes it even *probable* that he employed immersion rather than sprinkling or pouring. Where, then, I ask, is the *proof* that Christ was baptized by immersion? There is plainly none at all. And it is amazing, that good and sensible men can be so blind or so rash as to assume boldly that he *was* immersed; and then add to the assumption the monstrous untruth, that the young convert is required, in baptism, to "follow the example of the Saviour, and be buried in a watery grave!"

But if I be asked whether there is anything in the Scriptures to indicate the probable mode of Christ's baptism, I answer, To my own mind, there certainly is. I will present it, and the reader can allow it whatever weight he may think it entitled to. If the baptism of Christ was, as there seems no good reason to doubt, designed to be a part of his external consecration to the priesthood of the Messiah, in honor of the divinely enacted statute, and 'thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness,' then we have instruction touching both the reason why he was baptized, and the mode of his baptism. By a reference to Exodus 29 : 4, the reader will see that the law required the priests to be washed or purified with water before entering on their priesthood. "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle, and shalt wash them with water." Accordingly, when the Saviour was about to commence his public ministry, he wished to honor this requirement of the law, and be washed, or purified. John was fully competent to do it, being himself a Levite, the son of Zacharias. And there was a special fitness in the Saviour's going to him; because he was the divinely appointed

forerunner of Christ, a prophet, and not excelled in greatness by any of woman born. Hence the Saviour went to him and demanded this ceremony of the law. Now, if we can ascertain in what manner this washing under the law was performed, it will be fair to infer that Christ was washed or purified in the same manner. As the Lord would have it, we are not left wholly in the dark on this point. A little further along — in Numbers 8: 7, the needed information is found. In giving charge concerning the ceremony of washing or cleansing the Levites, the Lord says to Moses, "And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them; SPRINKLE water of purifying upon them." Now, tell me if there is nothing here to indicate the mode of Christ's baptism. Baptism, be it remembered, is ceremonial purification. Christ would "fulfil all righteousness" by complying with this requirement of the law, when about to commence his public ministry. The law demanded that the priests, in their consecration, should be washed, cleansed, or purified with water. Accordingly Christ went to John to be thus ceremonially cleansed; — in other words, to be baptized. But in what manner should it

be performed? The law declares it shall be done by *sprinkling*. I will leave the reader now to judge whether it is probable that Christ obeyed this instruction and was sprinkled, or whether he departed from it and was immersed. I am, however, free to declare it as my own solemn conviction, that Christ was baptized by sprinkling. And yet I do not believe it affects the main question now before us in the least, whether he was baptized in the one way or the other. It is worth nothing at all in settling the question about the proper mode of baptism in the Christian Church. As I have before shown, the baptism of Christ was not intended to be an example for our baptism — it being performed for a purpose totally different from ours, and before the baptism of the Christian Church was instituted. And I am accustomed to administer the ordinance by sprinkling, not because I believe Christ was sprinkled; but because, in the absence of specific instruction on the subject, I believe Christ has given his ministers the general command to baptize; while baptism is purification, and sprinkling is a mode of purification abundantly recognized in the Scriptures, and therefore valid. It is also convenient and

safe in all countries, in all weather, and in all conditions of bodily health; — which can hardly be said of baptism by any other mode.

We will now pass, and consider the case of the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism by Philip. It is by many confidently affirmed that here was an instance of immersion, beyond any reasonable doubt. But much as I respect and esteem many of the men who hold this opinion, I must confess that I am not able to awaken in my own mind any very particular respect for the opinion itself. And yet, because so many embrace and teach it, it requires attention. The scene is described in Acts 8: 38, 39. "And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more." Now, the entire evidence of this man's having been baptized by immersion, and all that is urged by its strongest advocates, apart from the meaning of the word *baptize*, is found in the fact of their leaving the chariot and stepping to the water, and in the use of the English prepositions *into* and *out of*.

First, it is said that "a small quantity of water might easily have been handed them, and the ordinance administered without the inconvenience of descending from the chariot, if a small quantity would have sufficed." So it might, undoubtedly, if that had been deemed desirable; for very probably there may have been, in the baggage of the eunuch, some vessel in which a servant could have dipped up and handed to the chariot as much water as would have sufficed for sprinkling or pouring. But would that have been the most natural way of proceeding? Surely the eunuch was not then in a state of mind to stand upon his dignity, and refuse to leave his carriage to receive the sacrament of baptism. And besides, after a long ride over a desert road, on arriving where was water, it would seem to be a not unpleasant relief to get upon the feet and step to the fountain or stream. If I had been in the place of Philip, with my present views and feelings, and he had desired me to baptize him, instead of having a servant get out a cup and hand up the water for me to baptize him sitting in his carriage, I would have had him get out, and, stepping with me down to the water, there reverently stand or kneel be-

fore God, with head uncovered, while I baptized him "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And just so, I doubt not, any Presbyterian minister would have done. Hence it is not so "unnatural" as some affirm, to suppose that, for the purpose of baptism by sprinkling or pouring, he got out of his carriage, and received the ordinance in a reverential manner, rather than that he maintained his seat in the chariot, bolstered up by his dignity. How far, therefore, the circumstance of getting out of his carriage and stepping to the water goes to prove that he *must have been immersed*, is a question that I will not further pursue.

But the main reliance, in this passage, by the advocates of exclusive immersion, is on the prepositions "*into*" and "*out of*." It is said in the text that they both went down *into* the water; and after the baptism, they came up *out of* the water. This is precisely parallel to what is said in connection with Christ's baptism, and affords the same sort of argument. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway *out of* the water." And need I say again, that going *into* the water, and coming *out of* the water, do not necessarily imply a total immersion? Nothing

is proved by such expressions. There is reason enough why they may have stepped into the water, in that parched and sultry region, with only sandals on their feet, for the purpose of baptism even by sprinkling or pouring; without its being necessary to suppose that a total immersion was the object aimed at. There is no intimation of any disrobing, or changing of raiment on the occasion; — a silence quite as significant *against* immersion, as going into and coming out of the water is *in favor* of it. But in truth, there is no proof in either. And still more utterly destitute of force, if possible, are these prepositions, for the purpose of proving immersion, when we look at them in the language in which Luke wrote them. I feel safe in saying that no reader of the Greek Testament, in private discussion with another who is known also to read it, will ever have the effrontery to urge these expressions, "*into* the water," and "*out of* the water," as proof that the eunuch was immersed. For the information of such of my readers as may need it, let me say that, when it is said they went down into the water, the Greek word for *into* is *eis;* and when it is said they came up out of the water, the Greek

word for *out of* is *ek*. Now these words, *eis* and *ek*, are both extremely variable in their significations; and if the translators had expressed *eis* by the English word *to*, and *ek* by the English word *from*, it would have been perfectly in accordance with the habitual meaning of these words; and no one would then have thought of doubting the accuracy of the translation any more than now. They often mean *into* and *out of*, and they often mean *to* and *from*, and they often have other meanings, according to the connection in which they stand. But supposing the translators had seen fit to express them by *to* and *from*, the passage would then have read as follows: "And they went down both to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up from the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more." Who would ever have quoted this as a proof text for immersion, if that had been the way it read? And yet it would have been quite as true to the original as it is now. There is, then, plainly no proof at all in these words, respecting the mode of the eunuch's baptism. In order to show from this passage even a *probability* for

immersion in preference to any other mode, it needs to be shown that these terms must *necessarily* be translated by *into* and *out of* — that, in such a connection, they can be rightly expressed by *nothing else.* But it would be amusing to see a Greek scholar attempting this. Let me give some examples showing the use of these prepositions by the inspired writers. Take, in the first place, *eis*, here translated *into*, and see just *how* necessary it is that it should *always* be read *into*, and nothing else. Matt. 12 : 41. "They repented *eis* the preaching of Jonah" — *at* the preaching—certainly not *into* the preaching of Jonah. Luke 11 : 49. "I will send *eis* them prophets and apostles" — I will send *to* them — not *into* them, prophets and apostles. John 11 : 38. "Jesus therefore groaning within himself, cometh *eis* the grave" — *to* the grave— not *into* the grave. John 21 : 4. "Jesus stood *eis* the shore" — *on* the shore — not *into* the shore. These are only a few of the many examples which might be given, showing how preposterous it is to suppose *eis* can mean nothing but *into*, and that the passage could not be lawfully translated otherwise than it is. I have had the curiosity to count the number of instan-

ces in which the preposition *eis* is used in this single chapter containing the account of the eunuch's baptism; and to observe how, in each instance, it is translated in our English Bible. And what does the reader think is the result? I find the word used in this chapter *eleven* times. *Once* it is translated *into; twice* it is *in; once* it is *at; once* it is *with; once* it is *unto;* and FIVE TIMES it is TO. The single instance where it is rendered *into* is in the case of the eunuch's baptism. By what authority, then, does any one contend that this word *eis* must necessarily mean *into* rather than *to;* and upon this assumption that they went *into* the water, attempt to maintain that the eunuch was immersed? For my own part, I do not believe they stepped foot into the water, unless it was for the comfort of the thing. The most fair and legitimate reading of the passage would be, "They went down both to the water."

The same kind of reasoning might be had on the word *ek*, here translated *out of*. With quite as much propriety might it have been rendered *from*, and the passage have been made to read, "And when they were come up from the water," &c. To show the reader that *ek* does

not necessarily always mean *out of*, but may also mean *from*, and that it might properly have been so rendered in this passage, I will only refer to two or three examples, taken from a multitude that might be given, where it *must* be translated *from*, and not *out of*. John 19 : 12. "And (*ek*) *from* thenceforth Pilate sought to release him." Who would here say, 'And *out of* thenceforth?' John 19 : 23. "Now the coat was without seam, woven (*ek*) *from* the top throughout." Who would read it, 'woven *out of* the top throughout?' John 20 : 21. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away (*ek*) *from* the sepulchre." Who dare say it should read, '*out of* the sepulchre,' when we know the stone was placed only *at the door* of the sepulchre? Such examples may suffice to show the plain English scholar that, although *ek* is here translated *out of*, it is not necessarily so; but might just as well and as truly have been rendered *from* as *out of*. And I say again that, if the translators had made the passage read, "And they went down both to the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they

were come up from the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," it would have been quite as accurate a translation as it is now; and hence there is not a particle of evidence in this passage that they even wet their feet. Where, then, is the proof, afforded by this example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, showing that immersion is the only valid mode of baptism?

In respect to the baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, mentioned in the second chapter of Acts, I do not deny that the apostles might possibly have accomplished it by immersion, if they had easy access to a sufficient number of baths to keep them all employed, together with all the conveniences which modern ingenuity has devised to facilitate the operation. But it should be remembered that it was already about nine o'clock in the morning when Peter began his sermon. How long the discourse with other exercises lasted, we do not know; but it is doubtful if the baptizing commenced much before noon. Then they must have baptized, on an average, two hundred and fifty persons each — a pretty large half-day's work, if it was all done by immersion. But where did they get their conveniences for im-

mersing so large a number? The little brook Kedron did not accommodate them. This no one pretends. The public baths of the city were not likely to be open to them for such a purpose; or if open, it is not probable that they could have occupied them unmolested — hated as was this sect by the great body of the inhabitants, as well as by the public authorities. And yet, if immersion was the way, with no previous arrangements, (for all this was sudden, and unexpected to every one,) they must all at once have found themselves in possession of pools or baths sufficient to enable twelve men to immerse each two hundred and fifty persons that very afternoon; while the narrative does not intimate that they left the place where they were assembled. Now I put it to the reader's candor, Is this probable? I do not say it is impossible — there is no need of affirming that. But is it likely? And what would be gained, even by *proving* that the three thousand *might* all have been that day immersed? It would only make the thing *possible;* while it would still be *just as* possible, and a great deal more *probable*, that they were baptized in some other way. But let it be supposed that they were purified by sprinkling or pour-

ing, and the whole transaction becomes perfectly easy and credible. So far, therefore, as this example throws any light at all on the mode of baptism, it is in favor of sprinkling or pouring rather than of immersion.

The record of *Paul's* baptism, also, *looks*, to say the least, as if he were baptized in some simpler form than by immersion. It is in Acts 9 : 17, 18. "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized." Now this certainly looks as if, immediately on receiving his sight, he arose from his seat or couch, and was baptized without leaving the room. But if so, is it not altogether more probable that he was purified by sprinkling or pouring than by immersion? I do not affirm that immersion in this case was impossible. If the Bible explicitly taught that immersion was the only true and valid mode of baptism, I might conjecture ex-

pedients enough, perhaps, to make this account consistent with the idea of Paul's having been immersed. But as it is, why should we feel called upon to task our ingenuity in any such way? Why not take the narrative as it reads, and adopt the idea which lies on its face? That idea, I hesitate not to say, is quite unfriendly to the doctrine of immersion; but with sprinkling or pouring it is entirely harmonious.

So in the case of the Philippian jailer, (Acts 16: 23.) This man was convicted of sin in the night by the miraculous opening of the prison where Paul and Silas were confined; and was immediately converted under their instruction; and "the same hour of the night" was baptized. Now, since the word *baptize* means in the Scriptures, neither immerse, sprinkle, or pour; but *purify:* — and since there is nothing in the design of the ordinance which requires immersion, what is there, I ask, in this case of the jailer to indicate purification by immersion rather than by sprinkling or pouring? There is no mention of river, pool, or bath, in the narrative—nothing which would lead us to suppose they left the prison walls; for it appears, from the account, that he did not even bring Paul and Silas into

his *house* until after his baptism. If this had been a palace, it might be said there was probably a bath connected with the establishment, where the immersion was had. But it was a heathen prison, and not therefore very likely to be supplied with such a luxury. I do not, indeed, deny the *possibility* of there having been a bath at hand, and of the jailer and his family having been immersed. But since nothing about it is said in the narrative, does it look probable? And even if there had been every possible convenience for immersion; and if these servants of God, whipped as they were only the day before almost to death, had been in a bodily condition to admit of their immersing this family, it would still remain to be proved that they actually did administer the ordinance by immersion, rather than by sprinkling or pouring. Such proof is nowhere to be found; while all the circumstances just adverted to, favor the idea of sprinkling or pouring rather than of immersion.

I will next observe, It is a fact of no trifling importance in this dicussion, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which water baptism is meant to be symbolical, is represented, never by

immersion, but by *pouring*. The Spirit is said to be *poured* upon men. His divine influence is represented as *coming down* on the subject whom he baptizes.

Again, it is important to observe that the sacrificial purification of the soul by the efficacy of Christ's blood, which is also represented by water baptism, is expressed by *sprinkling*. In 1 Pet. 1 : 2, believers are said to be "elect . . unto obedience, and SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST." In Heb. 12 : 24, it is said, "We are come . . . to THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. 10 : 22. "Having our hearts SPRINKLED from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water :" — thus expressing both the internal purification with the blood of Christ, and the external purification with water. And since the internal purification is figuratively said to be by *sprinkling*, it is fair to infer that the external washing, or symbolical purifying, is by sprinkling also.

Now, let me ask again, Where is the proof that immersion is the only valid mode of baptism? It certainly is not in the meaning of the word *baptize*. In Chapter I, I have, as I think,

fully proved *that* to be, frequently* at least, when used by the inspired writers, not immerse — not sprinkle — not pour; but *purify*, having no regard to the mode.

Nor is the proof of immersion, as the only valid mode of baptism, to be found in any *design* of the ordinance to represent *the burial and resurrection of Christ;* for I have, in Chapter II, shown that it has no such design; and that all which is said by our brethren about being "buried with Christ in baptism," and "being buried with him, by baptism, into death;" or being "planted in the likeness of his death;" and about being "also in the likeness of his resurrection," when urged in support of this alleged design of the ordinance, or of immersion as its only mode, is a mere begging of the question, but proving nothing. I have shown, as I believe unanswerably, that the passages of Scripture here alluded to, make no reference whatever to water baptism — either the baptism of Christ or of his Church; — that it is entirely

* See Dr. Edward Beecher's book, entitled "Baptism, its Import and Modes," wherein the author demonstrates that the sacred writers use the word *baptize*, not only frequently, but *always*, in the sense of *purify*.

of spiritual baptism that they treat — a baptism which produces death to sin and life to righteousness.

Nor, again, is there any proof of immersion in the terms employed to describe the baptism of Christ or the eunuch; as going down *into* the water, and coming up *out of* the water. And besides, as it respects the baptism of Christ, I have shown, in the early part of this chapter, that, in whatever way it was administered, it was not meant to be an example for us; but was intended for a totally different purpose, and occurred *before* the Saviour instituted the form of baptism for his Church. Hence believers are no more properly called upon to "follow Christ in baptism" than to follow him in eating, drinking, and sleeping. Christ ate, drank, and slept; and we too are to eat, drink, and sleep; but not particularly because he did, or in imitation of his example. So Christ was baptized; and we also ought to be baptized; but not particularly because he was, or to imitate his example; but because he has commanded it. The Saviour never meant his baptism to be any example for ours; although it was probably performed by sprinkling, and not by immersion.

Nor yet again, is the proof of immersion, as the only true mode, to be found in the *circumstances* connected with any of the recorded examples of baptism. There are no cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament where circumstances are mentioned which point more decidedly to immersion as the mode than those which I have considered; — none on which the advocates of immersion so much rely. And the reader can now judge whether, in either of these cases, the circumstances are such as to show that immersion, and nothing else, must have been the mode; or whether they are such as give preference to some simpler mode, as sprinkling or pouring.

And where, I once more ask, in all the word of God, is the proof that Christian baptism can be lawfully administered only by immersion? *There is none.* I confidently declare to the enquiring reader, THERE IS NONE. And if the word of God furnishes no proof to this effect, who is authorized to set up this particular mode of baptism before the Church, and say, "*This or nothing*"? Although I do not call in question the ability or honesty of the men who do it, yet I must question their prudence and accuracy; and I covet not their responsibility.

I am willing to acknowledge immersion to be a valid mode of baptism; yet not because it is *immersion*, but because it is a mode of ceremonial *purification*. And just so I regard *sprinkling* and *pouring* as valid modes of baptism; not because they are sprinkling or pouring, but because they are authorized modes of ceremonial *purification*. And since the great Head of the Church has not definitely taught us which of these modes we shall adopt — having only commanded us to purify or baptize, — every branch of the Church is clearly at liberty to elect its own mode; though bound to respect the modes elected by others. And every believer may unite himself to the Church where he can receive the ordinance in that mode which best satisfies his own conscience; and having done so, no one has any scriptural authority to deny the validity of his baptism.

CHAPTER IV.

INFANT BAPTISM — OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

The Church was infested with many false prophets before the apostles were in their graves. To fortify her against their errors of doctrine and practice, was a prominent object contemplated in the apostolic epistles. Their inspired authors enjoin the strictest carefulness against the reception of error. Paul especially charges the Church to "prove all things." He would have Christians bring every religious doctrine to the test of reason and the word of God; and not feel themselves at liberty, on the one hand, to receive every thing which might be taught; nor, on the other, to reject every thing that might be condemned. They were required to examine every religious topic with care, and whatever should abide the ordeal of sober reason and divine revelation, they were instructed to "hold fast," as "that which is good."

The same principle should govern the Church now. There is much diversity of doctrinal sentiment abroad, whose abettors claim to be divinely taught. And no man is at liberty to take without examination whatever may be declared to be the word or the will of God. We cannot throw off the obligation to employ our own powers in the investigation of truth and duty — to "prove all things," under the guidance of the Bible, and with such other helps as we can obtain. And when, upon any point, we have once ascertained the truth, we must "hold it fast;" and not suffer it to be wrested from us, or ourselves to be drifted away from it, "by every wind of doctrine" that blows. The doctrines of the Bible ought to be firmly rooted in our hearts and minds; as they can be only by the labor of careful and prayerful research.

These remarks are intended as preliminary to an application of their spirit to the doctrine of Infant Baptism; the discussion of which I design to open in the present chapter, by inquiring *whether the Scriptures contain anything adverse to infant baptism.*

That there is any *express prohibition* of this practice in the Bible, is not pretended, even by

those who most strenuously oppose it. The Scriptures nowhere contain such a prohibition. The argument against infant baptism, so far as it professes to be founded on the Scriptures, is obtained wholly by *implication and inference.* And yet I would by no means object to it on this ground. If a doctrine, duty, or prohibition is *fairly implied* in any passage of Scripture, or derived by *legitimate inference*, it is taught no less certainly and authoritatively than if it were directly affirmed. This must be so, if all the parts and forms of truth are consistent with each other. And, surely, no sound mind will deny that truth is harmonious throughout all its ramifications. If then, it can be shown, by any legitimate inference or implication, that the Scriptures discountenance infant baptism, we must accept it as divine authority against the practice.

I am not aware of more than three forms in which the opposers of infant baptism have ever supposed it to be forbidden in the word of God. These forms are the following.

1. It is alleged that *the Scriptures require faith and repentance as prerequisites to baptism; but infants cannot repent and believe;*

and hence, it is said, they ought not to be baptized.

2. It is affirmed that *there is no direct and positive precept enjoining infant baptism;* and that hence it is unauthorized, and by silence forbidden.

3. It is said that *there is no clear and indisputable example of infant baptism recorded in the Scriptures;* and that, consequently, we are not to believe it was practiced in the apostolic churches, especially since it is not expressly commanded.

I believe this is a perfectly fair representation of all that the Bible is supposed to teach *against* the practice of infant baptism.

I will, therefore, proceed to examine these several statements in their order.

1. It is alleged that *the Scriptures require faith and repentance as prerequisites to baptism; but infants cannot repent and believe;* and hence, it is said, they ought not to be baptized.

But of whom, let me ask, do the Scriptures require faith and repentance in order to baptism? Of adults? or of infants? or of both? Do they require these affections of *adults?*

Yes, and so do Presbyterians, and most other pedo-baptists. We never baptize adults, except on their profession of faith and repentance. But do the Scriptures require the same of infants? Certainly not, since they are incapable of faith and repentance. And neither do we, for the same reason. But do the Scriptures anywhere *forbid* baptism to infants on account of their being incapable of repentance and faith? Never, anywhere; and neither do we. But do not the Scriptures teach that none should be baptized, excepting them who repent and believe? *Nowhere in the Bible is such a sentiment taught.* The nearest thing to it which the Bible teaches is, that *adult persons* should believe and repent before being baptized. But surely this is a very different thing from teaching that *no one*, adult or infant, must be baptized without having personally repented and believed. The Bible teaches that *adult* persons must repent and believe in order to be *saved;* but this is a different matter from teaching that *no one*, adult or infant, can be saved without repentance and faith. The same is true in respect to baptism.

When the baptism of *adults* is spoken of, it is commonly mentioned in connection with their

faith or repentance ; as in Acts 2 : 38, 41. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." Also in Acts 8 : 12. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Again in Acts 8 : 37, Philip replies to the eunuch when proposing to be baptized, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." These and other similar passages show conclusively that, when *adults* are to be baptized, there must be evidence, at least by their profession, that they have repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These passages, however, are often cited to show that *none* should be baptized except on a personal profession of their faith and repentance. But they prove no such thing. They speak only of adults, and make no allusion to the case of infants. They do not, therefore, touch the question whether infants, who cannot repent and believe, are to be baptized. All these cases of baptism are precisely such as would have occurred, in the same circumstances,

if a modern Presbyterian minister had acted in the place of Peter or Philip. In every case of adult baptism, such as these passages refer to, *we* insist on repentance and faith in the subject. But the question about the baptism of infants is a totally different matter, and must be decided by other testimony, since this has no relation to the case. We know that, in the great Commission, Christ says, "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." And from this it is often argued that believing is required in order to baptism; and that no exception is made in favor of infants. But I reply that, although no exception in the case of infants is *expressed*, yet it is evidently *implied*, and did not *need* to be expressed; because the Saviour speaks here of such as are *capable of believing*, and not of infants.

But if any will have it that, because infants are not expressly excepted, therefore they are excluded from baptism, since they cannot believe; then I reply that, by the same rule of interpretation, infants are excluded from salvation, since they cannot believe; for it is said in the very same breath, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth

not shall be damned." Now, how can one who maintains that, because infants cannot believe they must not be baptized, escape the parallel that, because infants cannot believe they must not be saved. Let the question be asked, Who are to be baptized? and many of our brethren, reasoning from this passage, answer, "They who believe." But we ask them, Does that exclude infants from baptism? "Yes," say they, "because infants do not believe." Well, we advance a step further, and ask, Who are to be saved? Our brethren must answer, "They who believe and are baptized." But we ask again, Does that exclude infants from salvation? To be consistent with themselves, they must say, "Yes, because infants do not believe, and must not be baptized." Well, who shall be damned? "They who do not believe; for Christ says, 'He that believeth not shall be damned.'" But we ask, Does that include infants? By the same sort of reasoning, the answer should be, "Yes, because infants do not believe."

Now, I do not mean to insinuate that our brethren who differ from us on this subject really believe that infants are not saved. But to this sad conclusion we are inevitably forced by the

argument which would exclude them from baptism on the ground that they do not believe. But the truth is that, in this passage, infants are not referred to at all; and it proves neither the one thing nor the other, in relation to their baptism or their salvation. The Saviour here speaks only of adults, who are capable of believing; and no more teaches that infants are not to be baptized, than he does that they are not to be saved. There is, therefore, no force whatever in any argument against infant baptism which is grounded on those passages of Scripture which speak of repentance and faith as necessary prerequisites to the ordinance. Those passages, I repeat, all refer to adults only — not to infants at all; and if they prove that infants must not be baptized, they prove with equal certainty that they must all be damned. But of little children Christ has said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

2. It is affirmed that *there is no direct and positive precept enjoining infant baptism;* and that hence it is unauthorized, and by silence forbidden. But this argument is a bad one for two reasons, as I will now endeavor to show.

(1.) It is bad because, if admitted, it would

prove quite *too much;* and therefore, in fact, it proves nothing. The argument is this:—Because there is no express precept enjoining infant baptism, therefore infants must not be baptized. It should be observed here, that they who use this argument will admit no evidence obtained by inference, however fair; or by analogy, however close; or by implication, however perfect. Nothing else than a *positive precept*, enjoining the duty of baptizing the infants of believing parents, or an *indubitable example* of such baptism, will satisfy them. If they would accept proof in any other form, as by *inference*, or *implication*, we could overwhelm them with it. But no: they must have precept and example, or nothing. And why so shut up to this particular form of evidence? 'Because,' they say, 'in a *positive institution*, such as baptism, every thing in relation to it must be expressly enjoined; or a clear, unquestionable example must be given; otherwise it can have no authority.' We will look at the matter of *example* a little further along. At present I wish to examine this rigid claim for *express precept*. 'Show us the Scripture precept enjoining it,' say our brethren of the other side, 'and then we

will admit the validity of infant baptism; but not till then.' Well, if this is good reasoning on the subject of *baptism*, it is equally so on the subject of the *eucharist*. The Lord's Supper is as truly a positive institution as baptism; and if none may be admitted to baptism but such as are expressly declared to be entitled to it, then none may be admitted to the eucharistic supper but such as are expressly declared to be entitled to it. And, arguing by this rule, we challenge the opposers of infant baptism to show their authority for admitting females to the Lord's table. On *men* it was enjoined, "Do this in remembrance of me;" but nowhere in the Bible is this, or anything like it, enjoined *expressly* on women. I freely grant that the right of females to the Lord's Supper may be fairly *inferred* from several things; — such as their being admitted to baptism, and membership in the Church; and from their equal ability with men to discern the Lord's body, and to profit by the ordinance; and also from its being said in Gal. 3: 28, "There is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." From these, and some other considerations, it is *inferred*, and I think justly, that pious females

have an equal right with pious men to the table of the Lord. But let it be remembered, this is an *inference*, and not a *positive precept*. And they who can accept inferential proof in favor of female communion are bound to accept the same kind of proof in favor of infant baptism. The argument against infant baptism which is drawn from the absence of positive precept, is abandoned the moment you admit the validity of female communion, which has no positive precept to sustain it. And if inferential proof is good in its support, then the same kind of proof is equally good in support of infant baptism. And if the propriety of female communion is not to be held in doubt on account of there being no express precept or command in its favor, since it can be fairly proved by inference and analogy, then neither is the propriety of infant baptism to be held in doubt on account of there being no express precept or command in its favor, provided it can be fairly proved by inference and analogy. And this kind of proof I shall, as I trust, in due time, show to be abundant in favor of infant baptism. Whatever objections, therefore, may be urged against the baptism of infants, let no one object to it on the

ground that there is *no express precept* to support it, or *command* enjoining it, until he is prepared also, and for the same reason, to object to females coming to the sacramental Supper.

(2.) To deny the propriety of infant baptism on the ground that there is no express precept enjoining or authorizing it, is a bad argument, because it assumes, contrary to fact, that a privilege which God had once expressly conferred on the Church, and which had been enjoyed for many hundreds of years, and was never revoked, required to be expressly renewed, in order to retain its validity. It cannot be denied that the Church, under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations was expressly authorized to bring her infant offspring into covenant with God, and to have the *seal* of the covenant affixed to them. That seal was circumcision. Under the Christian dispensation, although the covenant, as to its spiritual part, continues, (as I shall endeavor to show in the next chapter,) yet the *seal* is changed from circumcision to baptism. But in this changing of the seal, there is nowhere any intimation that *the parties* interested in the covenant are to be changed — a thing which would require to be expressly stated, if any such

change in the parties were intended. Under the former dispensation, believers with their infant offspring were included in the covenant promise — "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," and had the seal placed upon them. And unless the contrary is declared, believers with their infant offspring are still included in the covenant promise, and entitled to its seal. The privilege which had been granted to the infant seed of the Church must necessarily remain until it is revoked. But nowhere in the Bible is there any intimation of this privilege being revoked; — nowhere is it intimated that, under the gospel dispensation, the Church must leave her children out of covenant, and withhold from them the seal. And hence the quietude of the Jewish believers on this subject. They never uttered a word of complaint that, under the gospel, they were to be denied the privilege which, for so many ages they had enjoyed — that of bringing their children with them into covenant relation to God; as they certainly would have complained, if such had been the fact. There never was a people more distinguished by any one trait of character than were the Jews by jealousy of their peculiar Church

privileges. And it is utterly incredible that they should have remained silent, if so important an encroachment had been made on those privileges, as that of excluding their infant offspring from the benefits of the covenant and its seal. But nowhere, either in the New Testament or in any profane history, have we one word of complaint on this ground. And for the very good reason that no such ground of complaint existed. The Jewish converts were recognized as members of the Christian Church, retaining their accustomed privilege in this respect, both for themselves and their children; and there was no occasion for anything to be said on the subject. God had not revoked his covenant in relation to either adults or children; and that covenant, it was understood, remained of course in full force. Only its outward *seal* was changed. But the new seal — baptism — would naturally be applied to adult believers and their infant seed, as circumcision had been. It needed no new announcement that the infants of believers should receive the seal of the covenant under the gospel. This followed as a matter of course, unless it was forbidden. But it was never forbidden, and the Jewish convert

might well be silent. On the supposition, therefore, that baptism, under the gospel, *is* to be administered to the infant offspring of believers, no express precept or warrant is to be looked for, or expected, in the New Testament. It was not at all needed. The warrant had long before been given in the command to fix the seal of the covenant on the children of the Church. Inasmuch as that command has never been revoked, there was no occasion to repeat it in the New Testament; and it still remains in full force. The argument, therefore, against infant baptism, which is founded on the absence of any express precept or command, is sheer sophism, entitled to no weight whatever in the decision of this question.

3. It is said that *there is no clear and indisputable example of infant baptism recorded in the Scriptures;* and that, consequently, we are not to believe it was practiced in the apostolic churches, especially since it is not expressly commanded. This argument is as lame as the one last considered, and much in the same way. What if there are no clear and indisputable examples of infant baptism recorded in the Scriptures? Does it thence follow that no such ex-

amples occurred? Apply this rule to the subject of female communion. There are no clear and indisputable examples of women coming to the Lord's table recorded in the New Testament. Will our brethren thence infer that no such examples occurred? Certainly not. And why not? Because they can prove, by inference, by analogy, and by implication, that pious females *have a right* to the Communion Supper, and therefore doubtless enjoyed that right. But in the same way, by inference, by analogy, and by implication, we can prove, as I intend to do, that the infants of believers have a right to baptism, and therefore doubtless enjoyed that right. And if the want of a clear and explicit example of women's coming to the Lord's table constitutes no argument against the propriety of female communion, then neither does the want of a clear and explicit example of infant baptism constitute any argument against the propriety of that practice. Female communion is not *forbidden*, and neither is infant baptism; and the evidence which supports the one is of precisely the same nature as that which supports the other; viz. inferential, analogical, and implied. But evidence afforded in this way, if it

be fairly inferred, fairly analogous, or fairly implied, is just as good as evidence afforded by direct precept, or explicit example. It is deemed sufficient to establish the authority of female communion; and with the same propriety it should be deemed sufficient to establish the authority of infant baptism.

But it should be remembered that it is not, and cannot be, *proved* that there are no examples of infant baptism recorded in the New Testament. There are several examples of *household baptism* recorded; and it can never be proved that infants were not included in more or less of those households. We admit, it is not certain that they *were* included; but neither is it certain that they were not. The cases are recorded precisely as we might have expected them to be, on the supposition that infants *were* among them, and received the seal of the covenant along with other members of the household; just as was the case when a family of heathen, including infants and adults, became converted and joined the Church under the former dispensation.

There is another important fact to be considered in regard to this matter of New Testament

example. The ministers of Christ, whose labors are recorded in the New Testament, were called to preach mostly among those who had not before received the gospel, or Christian baptism; and their first and main business was, of course, to preach to adults; and when they believed, to baptize them, and organize them into churches. They were *necessarily* baptized *on the profession of their faith*, rather than in infancy; because they had not had Christian parents to offer them in baptism while in infancy. It was with the apostles just as it is with our foreign missionaries on this subject. The first converts under their labors have been born, not of Christian, but of heathen parents, and of course were not baptized in infancy, but require the ordinance on the profession of their faith. So with the apostles. Their first converts were not born of Christian parents, but of heathen, or of Jews under the law; and of course could not have been baptized in infancy. Hence it became necessary to baptize them on the profession of their faith; just as would have been done, if they had believed under the preaching of a modern Presbyterian. And the fact of their baptism being thus recorded in connection with their

profession of faith does not in any way militate against the propriety of baptizing the children of believing parents. It does not touch the subject. Nor is it at all strange that no more should have been said, in such circumstances, on the subject of infant baptism; or that, in their addresses to people so situated, they should have said, "Repent and be baptized;" or "Believe and be baptized." In preaching to unbaptized adults, they could hardly have spoken in any other way. And the examples of baptism to be recorded in such circumstances would most naturally be those of adults rather than of infants, except as they baptized *households;* since the nations were then for the first time receiving the gospel.

But there is another phase to this argument respecting Scripture example which we have not yet considered. The labors of the apostles extended through a period of *between thirty and forty years*, during which time many thousands believed, and were gathered into the Church. Now, it cannot be doubted that, during this period, especially the latter part of it, many were converted and received into the Church who were born of Christian parents — parents who had

been among the earlier fruits of the apostles' ministry. But among all the examples of *adult* baptism mentioned in the New Testament, there is not one of a person who was born of Christian parents. Now, observe in what direction this fact testifies. Of all the descendants of Christian parents, who were converted and received into communion during that period of thirty odd years in which the apostles labored, not one case is mentioned where the subject was baptized on profession of his faith. Yet we dare not presume that no such persons were converted in all that time. We know there were some; and, considering the remarkable success which attended the ministry of the apostles, we must believe that *many* were converted who were the children of believing parents. And why have we not an account of the baptism of some one or more of them? If the apostles had been from the first in the habit of baptizing believers' *households*, including the infant children, this will explain it. Those persons, having been baptized in infancy with the households to which they belonged, there was no occasion for further notice of their baptism.

And certainly the fact that there is no specific

record of the baptism of such a person does not argue that these persons were not baptized at all. Neither does the fact that there is no specific record of infant baptism argue that infants were not baptized at all. And from all that has been said on this point, I think the reader cannot fail to see that, before we can be justified in rejecting the baptism of infants on the ground of there being no record of such a case in the Bible, we must be prepared, on the same ground, to reject female communion, and believe that all the children of Christian parents who grew up and were converted during the ministry of the apostles, were received into the Church without ever being baptized at all.

I have now done with the main arguments which are urged against infant baptism. So far as I know, they are all comprised in the three which have been considered, viz.

1. The Scriptures require faith and repentance in order to baptism; but infants cannot repent and believe, and therefore ought not to be baptized.

2. There is no direct precept or command authorizing infant baptism.

3. There is no clear and explicit example

of infant baptism recorded in the New Testament.

Here, I believe, is the whole strength of the opposition, *except what consists in objecting to our direct evidence in favor of the practice.* In respect to the *first* of these arguments, I have shown that it rests on a misapprehension of Scripture, in applying to all classes what is intended only for adults; and that, on the supposition that infants are included, it will prove that they must all be damned; since, if only they who believe are to be baptized, then only they who believe and are baptized are to be saved, and they who do not believe shall be damned.

In respect to the *second* of these arguments, that which is drawn from the absence of any express command or precept in favor of infant baptism, I have shown that there was no occasion for such a precept in the New Testament to authorize the practice, since it is only using a privilege which God had long before granted to the Church, and had never recalled, viz. the privilege of bringing her infant offspring into covenant with God by fixing the seal of the covenant upon them. I have also shown that, if infants are to be refused baptism for want of an

express Bible precept, then females are to be refused the sacramental supper for the same reason; and I might have added that, for the same reason, we should refuse to observe *the first day of the week* as the Christian Sabbath, since there is no direct precept to justify it; and we defend the practice only by inferential reasoning, such as is employed to defend infant baptism and female communion.

With respect to the *third* and last of these arguments, — that which is drawn from the want of any explicit scriptural example of infant baptism, I have shown that, in the circumstances of the apostles, laboring, as they did, chiefly among people who had not before received the gospel, such examples are scarcely to be expected, except as they baptized households. Further, I have shown that if infant baptism is to be rejected for want of explicit examples in the New Testament, then for the same reason we must reject female communion, and believe that all the children of the Church, who grew up and were converted under the ministry of the apostles during a period of thirty odd years, were received into the Church without any baptism at all.

Now, I do not think my readers are quite prepared to believe that all who die in infancy are damned; or that a privilege which God had once granted to the Church, and never recalled, became null on the introduction of the gospel, merely because it was not explicitly renewed; or that pious females should be refused admission to the sacramental supper; or that the first day of the week should not be observed as the Christian Sabbath; or that the converted children of Christian parents were received into the Church under the apostles unbaptized. But if we are not prepared to believe all this, then we must believe these arguments against infant baptism are good for nothing — mere sophisms, entitled to no weight or confidence whatever; and that consequently the Scriptures contain nothing *adverse* to this practice.

In the next chapter I will call attention to some of the direct arguments in defence of infant baptism, — especially such as are drawn from the Abrahamic covenant.

CHAPTER V.

INFANT BAPTISM — ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

In opening the discussion of *infant baptism* in the last chapter, I called attention to the question, whether the Scriptures contain or teach any thing *adverse* to the practice of baptizing the infants of believers. The evidence and arguments urged against this practice by its opponents were shown to be inappropriate and unsound; and the conclusion was reached, (how satisfactorily, I leave the reader to judge,) that the Scriptures do *not* teach any thing adverse to this practice.

I come now to the next thing contemplated, viz. to *ascertain and exhibit what the Scriptures teach* IN FAVOR *of infant baptism*, especially in connection with the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. And, as the basis of the discussion, I offer the following propositions.

I. *The Church of God was originally organized under the covenant made with Abraham.*

II. *In that covenant, children were included with their parents, and helped to compose the Church.*

III. *The Christian Church is that same Church continued, only under another form of administration.*

IV. *Believers in the Christian Church have the same interest in* THE MAIN PROVISION *of the Abrahamic covenant as believers in the Jewish Church had. That covenant is still in force.*

V. *The Christian Church has the same privilege of including her infant offspring in the covenant as the Jewish Church had; unless, by some new arrangement, God has forbidden it.*

VI. *The privilege of believing parents bringing their children with them into covenant with God, and thus into the visible Church — and that, too, by the same ordinance which is appointed for themselves, has never been withdrawn; and therefore still remains.*

VII. *The Jewish converts to Christianity never understood the Christian Church to exclude the children of believers.*

VIII. *The unbelieving Jews never raised the objection against the Christian Church that they excluded their infant offspring.*

IX. *Baptism is the only ordinance of initiation into the Church under the gospel, and the only seal or token of the covenant; and hence belongs to all who are the proper subjects of church-membership. It belongs, therefore, to believing parents and their infant seed.*

To the establishment of these propositions I will now direct my endeavors.

I. *The Church of God was originally organized under the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham.* That covenant I will here transcribe. Gen. 17: 1–14. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant be-

tween me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger,—all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. * And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circum-

* In this arrangement, females were reckoned in the males, and therefore needed no personal seal.

cised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

Previously to the date of this covenant, as every attentive reader of the Bible knows, the worship of God was maintained only by isolated persons, here and there, scattered amid the prevailing irreligion or idolatry; and having no organization or concert, and no systematic means of perpetuating a pure faith. The consequence was, that, for the second time, true religion had become well-nigh obliterated from the earth. But God had determined now to establish a systematic plan for maintaining religion among men;—a plan by which his own worshipers should combine their influence, and secure to successive generations a pious training from infancy. He therefore proceeded to organize in the family of Abraham a regular Church, with *covenant and ordinance.* The Scripture account of this transaction, the reader has just seen. It may be paraphased and amplified as follows:—

'Behold, Abram, I have called thee out from thy native Ur of the Chaldees, and separated thee from thy father's house, and promised to make thee the father of a very numerous posterity; and I have appropriated to thy posterity

this land of Canaan wherein thou now dwellest; and I have also promised that in thy seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. I will now reveal to thee more fully what is my purpose in all this. And first, I will repeat what I have heretofore promised, that thou shalt be the father of many nations, and of kings; on which account thy name shall now be changed from Abram to Abraham, which signifies, *father of a great multitude.* This multiplication of thy seed shall be true *literally;* and it shall also be true in a more important and *spiritual* sense, which will be better understood hereafter.

'But my object in these arrangements is to provide for the maintenance of true religion among men. I will therefore organize a Church in thy family, to be perpetuated in thy seed—literal and spiritual;—a Church which shall worship me, the only true God. And I will now establish my covenant with thee, and with thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant. And these shall be the *terms* of this covenant. On your part, it shall be required that ye worship me alone as God, and maintain a holy life. Go not after other gods, and beware of every wickedness. Walk before me, and be thou per-

fect. And, on my part, I promise that I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee. The nations around thee are vainly trusting to idol gods, which cannot profit them; but *I* will be *thy* God, and the God of *thy seed*. Thus, therefore, do I now establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, to be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee. And this is the token and seal of the covenant between me and you, which ye shall keep and use, viz. Thou shalt be circumcised; and every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people. He shall be rejected from the privileges of the Church, and have no interest in the covenant promise.'

After the establishment of this covenant, Abraham was forthwith circumcised, and every male person in his household. Thus was the Church organized, having the covenant of God for its constitution, and the ordinance of circumcision for its seal.

Nothing, I think, can be more manifest, than that the grand design in all this was to provide an agency for resisting the tide of wickedness, and establishing righteousness on the earth, by

raising up a multitude of pious worshipers of the true God. For this purpose the land of Canaan was given them, that they might be kept separate from the idolatrous nations about them, and not be contaminated by their pernicious example or influence. And in accordance with this grand design, it was promised to Abraham that his seed should be amazingly numerous. But the *gist* of the whole, and that for which all the rest was given, consisted in the promise, "I WILL BE A GOD TO THEE, AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE." It was this which secured true religion among them, and distinguished them from the idolatrous world. *This* promise conveyed to Abraham and his seed all the *spiritual* blessings of the *Church*. It is this promise which God calls, by way of eminence, his "*covenant*," and which he establishes in the line of Isaac, in distinction from the other children of Abraham, as mentioned a little further on, in the 21st verse. He engages that Ishmael shall be made a great nation; "but," says he, "my *covenant* will I establish with Isaac." It is this which the apostle Paul refers to as "*the promise*," when he says that believers in the Gentile Church, being Christ's, are "Abraham's seed,

and heirs according to *the promise.*" Gal. 3: 29. This spiritual promise — "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," is, therefore, the constitution of the Church — the covenant of God under which she is organized. From the date of this covenant, the people of God have had a visible distinction from the men of the world, being an organized community by themselves. To this community, as it existed in the time of Moses, the martyr Stephen refers, and calls it "the Church in the wilderness." Acts 7: 38. This was the Church of God—the community of true worshipers, which has been perpetuated to the present day, and will exist to the end of time. From these considerations, I think it must be sufficiently plain that *the Church of God was originally organized under the covenant made with Abraham.*

II. *In that covenant, children were included with their parents, and helped to compose the Church.* Circumcision being appointed as the token or seal of the covenant, all were necessarily included in the covenant to whom the seal was orderly applied. Not only did Abraham receive the seal, but also the children of his household. And ever afterwards, when one

from among the other nations became a proselyte to the Jewish faith,* he received circumcision himself, and also the male children of his family. In this way, he and his household became members of the visible Church. They thereby came under covenant obligation, along with the natural seed of Abraham, to 'walk before God and be perfect;' and were entitled to the benefits of the promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." The introduction of the children of believers into the covenant by the application of the seal to them was by special divine injunction; and the man-child who was not circumcised was treated as an offender, and rejected from the Church and all the spiritual privileges of the covenant promise. "He shall be cut off from his people," says God; "he hath broken my covenant." It cannot, therefore, be denied, and it is not disputed, that the children of believers were originally embraced in the covenant of God, as being included in the Church, and having the initiatory seal or token placed upon them.

*That is, a "proselyte of righteousness;" and not merely a "proselyte of the gate."

III. My next position is that, *the Christian Church is this same Church continued, only under another form of administration.* This is demonstrated by the apostle Paul, in the eleventh chapter of Romans; where, in allusion to what is said in Jer. 11 : 16, he represents the Jewish nation, which was constituted the visible Church of God by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, under the figure of an olive tree, of which Abraham was the root, and his descendants by Isaac the branches. The passage in Jeremiah is prophetic, and is as follows: — "The Lord called thy name, A GREEN OLIVE TREE, fair and of goodly fruit. With the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the BRANCHES of it are BROKEN. For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel, and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves, to provoke me to anger." Now, in direct allusion to this prophecy of Jeremiah, and as if to show its fulfilment, the apostle, when speaking of the unbelieving Jews being thrust out of the visible Church, represents them as the *natural* branches of the olive tree BROKEN OFF for their unbelief;

while the believing Gentiles, taken from a wild stock, are grafted into the good olive tree; that is to say, are incorporated into the visible Church, and permitted to partake of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. "And if," says he, addressing the Gentile believers in a strain of admonition and warning, — "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree," [partakest, with the believing Jews, of all the privileges of God's covenant and Church,] "boast not against the branches;"—meaning the *broken-off branches.* "But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." [If you do boast, remember that you have not conveyed Church privileges to Abraham and his posterity; but the covenant was made with Abraham and his seed; and they have been the means of opening the privileges of the Church to you.] "Thou wilt say, then, The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." ['The natural branches, the Jews, were broken off — cast out of the Church — that we Christian Gentiles might be admitted in.'] "Well," says Paul, "because of un-

belief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; — on them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" — [cut off from this same good olive tree, the Church of God, from which the Jews for unbelief were broken off; and into which you Gentiles have been grafted.] "And they also, [the Jews,] if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again:" — [into the same olive tree, or Church from which they were broken off.] "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, [they had been brought out of heathenism,] and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree,— [the Church of God,]—how much more shall these [Jews] which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree:" — [their own Church.]

Now, what can be plainer than all this? Here the apostle, in imitation of Jeremiah, speaks of the Jewish Church under the figure of a good

olive tree, of which Abraham is called "the root," because the Church, as an organized community, began with him; and the covenant, as the constitution of the Church, was made with him. Of this Church, founded by God in the family of Abraham, the Jews were the natural members. They were "the natural branches" of the "olive tree." But when they refused to receive Christ as the promised Messiah and Head of the Church; or to believe in him as the Son of God and Saviour of men; they were, for their unbelief, rejected from the visible Church, and the blessings of God's covenant; — they were "broken off" from the olive tree. This was true of the mass of the nation. There were, however, many exceptions. Many of the Jews believed in Christ, and were permitted to retain their place in the true Church, and still enjoy the privilege of that sacred covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." They remained in their own "good olive tree," as green and fruitful branches; while the unbelieving Jews were broken off. Into this same olive tree the Gentile converts to Christianity were grafted. The old tree was not broken down and destroyed, and a new one planted in its stead.

The old Church, with her precious spiritual covenant, was not broken down and abolished. She still remained, a good olive tree; and the Gentile converts to the Christian faith were grafted into her; and, along with believing Jews, were permitted to "partake of the root and fatness of the olive" — were allowed to share in the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham, and enjoy all the spiritual privileges of the Church. The idea, therefore, that the Jewish Church was abolished, and that the Christian Church is a new institution, is altogether a mistake. The Christian Church is but a continuation of the Jewish Church — the same good olive tree; except that most of the original branches have been removed, and others have been grafted in. But still, some of the natural branches remain; and as fast as the Jews are converted to Christ, they are grafted back "into their own olive tree." The Church is *one;* as Christ, speaking of the Church in the Song of Solomon, says, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." The tree is the same; its root and its trunk continue the same; and it is nourished and supported by the same gracious covenant, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee."

It is true, the Church is under a different form of administration from what she was before the death of Christ. Her sacraments have, by express divine authority, been changed, agreeably to her changed condition and circumstances. And many of her ceremonies have been abolished by the same express authority; because the purposes for which they were instituted have been accomplished, and the occasion for them does not now exist. But this change in the external polity of the Church is a very different thing from the annihilation of one Church, and the institution of another. Nor does a change in the *outward ceremonies* of the Church involve any change in the rights and privileges of membership. The same persons who were entitled to membership, and the benefits of the covenant, before the ceremonial law was abrogated, are entitled to these privileges now, unless excluded by express divine authority.

If any thing more were wanting to show the identity of the Jewish Church, organized under the Abrahamic covenant, and the Christian Church that now is, it might be found in that remark of Christ to the Jews in Matt. 21: 43. "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God

shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." By "the kingdom of God," here, is evidently intended, the visible Church, in which God reigns the acknowledged King. Agreeably to this declaration, the privileges of the Church were, *in fact*, taken from the Jews, and given to the believing Gentiles. The Jews, for many ages, had been in almost exclusive possession of the Church, with the ordinances of religion. But, as a nation, they did not yield to God the appropriate fruits of religion, and were rejected for their stubborn unbelief. The visible Church — God's kingdom on earth — with covenant and ordinance, which had so long been confined almost entirely to them, was taken from them, and is now in the possession of Gentiles, who bring forth more appropriate fruits. But the Christian Church among the Gentiles is the same Church — the same spiritual kingdom of God — which was taken from the Jews, and which, in an organized form, began with Abraham.

It would probably be superfluous to argue this point further. I am sure it must be evident to every attentive and unprejudiced reader, that the Jewish Church was not abolished on the in-

troduction of the gospel; nor was the Christian Church then founded as a new and separate institution; but that the Christian Church of the present day is, in the mind of God, a continuation, under a changed exterior, of that same Church which had its commencement in the household of Abraham.

IV. I propose next, to show that *believers in the Christian Church have the same interest in the main provision of the Abrahamic covenant as believers in the Jewish Church had.* By the *main provision* I mean the spiritual promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee;" with the obligation on their part to maintain holiness of life, as expressed by the command, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." The promise of Canaan was merely an appendage to the covenant,— an incidental thing, to provide a resting place for the Church, and save her from contamination, by keeping her separate from the idolatrous world around. As the main object of God in organizing the Church appears to have been, *to raise up a people for his own worship and service*, in whom the purity and power of true religion might be exemplified; so the main thing in the covenant was that spiritual prom-

ise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." And in this covenant promise, I say, believers in the Christian Church have the same interest as believers under the former dispensation had. The covenant is still in full force; — as much so as at any time after the days of Abraham. This indeed follows necessarily, if the Church is the same. But we are not left to gather it by such an *inference*. We have apostolic testimony to the fact. In the third chapter of Galatians, the apostle Paul has the following reasoning on the subject. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." If we had not been redeemed from the curse of the law, we must all have perished in our sins. But Christ hath redeemed us, in order that "the blessing of Abraham" — that is to say, the blessing promised in the covenant with Abraham — might come on the Gentiles as well as the Jews, by virtue of our union to Christ through faith. For the promises were made, not so much to the *natural* descendants of Abraham, as to Christ in behalf of believers who exercise the faith of Abraham.

"Now," says Paul, in the chapter above referred to,— "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of MANY," viz. Abraham's natural descendants; "but as of ONE, And to thy seed, which is Christ." To Christ, as the representative of his people, who possess the faith of Abraham, were the promises made. "And this I say, that THE COVENANT, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, [confirmed to believers, in the person of Christ,] the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make THE PROMISE of none effect." The ceremonial law, which was abrogated at the death of Christ, was not given until centuries after this covenant was made with Abraham. How then, the apostle's reasoning asks, could the abrogation of the law disannul the covenant, or impair the efficacy of the promise, since the covenant was in no way dependent on the ceremonial law, but existed hundreds of years before the law was given? Here is an argument constructed by the apostle on purpose to prove that the Abrahamic covenant is not done away, but is yet in full force in the Christian Church. And he concludes the argument by saying,

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs, according to the promise." As if he had said, If you are Christians, then you are the spiritual seed of Abraham, and heirs of the blessing promised in the covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." You are members of the same Church, and entitled to the same covenant privileges, as were the direct descendants of Abraham, who believed. This argument of the apostle, I think, ought to be sufficient to satisfy us, not only that the visible Church now is the same as that which was organized in the family of Abraham, but that the covenant made with Abraham is still in full force, as the basis or constitution of the Church. And hence, of course, the Christian Church has now the same kind of interest in the spiritual promise of the Abrahamic covenant as the Jewish Church had.

There is a passage in the eighth chapter of Hebrews which, at first sight, may seem to conflict with this view; but, when more particularly examined, is found to confirm it. The passage is as follows: "But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry [than the Aaronic priesthood,] by how much also he is the

mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For, finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the grea est. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

A hasty reading of this passage may lead some to suppose that the Abrahamic covenant cannot now be in force; because that which is here called "the first covenant" is represented as "old," and "vanishing away;" and exchanged for "a new and better covenant, established on better promises," and having Christ for its minister. But a little attention will clear up this matter, and show with which of these two covenants, if either, the Abrahamic covenant is identified. It is certain that by "the first covenant," here called "old," is *not* meant the Abrahamic covenant, but that of the Mosaic ritual, or covenant given on Mount Sinai. God calls it, "The covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." And in the next chapter, this same "first" or "old" covenant is described with *the tabernacle*, *the candlestick*, *the shew-bread*, *the holy of holies*, *the golden censer*, *the ark of the covenant*, *the pot of manna*, *Aaron's rod*, *the tables of the law*, *the cherubim of glory*, and *the mercy-seat;* all of which identify it as the Mosaic covenant, and not the Abrahamic. But that which is here introduced as "a new covenant" is plainly a *new*

edition of the *Abrahamic* covenant. It is called "new," because it was such to the minds of the Hebrews at that time. For ages, they had been accustomed to regard chiefly the Mosaic covenant—the law of ceremonial observances. This was to their minds "the old covenant." And when the spiritual and gospel-like provisions of the Abrahamic covenant were renewedly presented before them as objects of promise, the covenant containing them, though actually dating back some hundreds of years earlier than the other, was to them appropriately styled "a new covenant." That the new covenant here spoken of is really intended as a renewed expression of the covenant with Abraham, especially the spiritual part of it, is evident from the fact that their provisions are the same, and their language is the same, except that the former is more amplified. Look at it again. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE TO ME A PEOPLE. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know ye the Lord;

for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." In this covenant, God, by the prophet Jeremiah, (31 : 31–34,) plainly promises to renew, pardon, and sanctify his chosen people; all of which is virtually included in the one grand idea of his being to them a God, and their being to him a people. And this was exactly the spiritual blessing promised in the covenant with Abraham. The fulfilment of this promise to the Church under the gospel is the fair and legitimate carrying out of the covenant made with Abraham, and confirms the doctrine that that covenant is still the blessed inheritance of the Christian Church.

V. The next point to be established is this :— *Members in the Christian Church have now the same privilege of including their infant offspring in the covenant as members in the Jewish Church had, unless, by some new arrangement, God has forbidden it.* Indeed, this follows as a necessary consequence of their having *the same interest* in the covenant. In the Jewish economy, parents who were themselves interested in the covenant of God were, by divine authority, per-

mitted, and even *required*, to extend its benefits to their infant offspring, by having the covenant seal placed upon them. This seal was the visible badge or token of their relation to the Church; and its administration was the initiating ordinance. That the provisions of the covenant embraced the infant seed of believers in the Jewish Church, I believe has never been disputed by Jew or Gentile. And accordingly, it was the uniform custom, in that Church, for parents to bring the children of their households into covenant with God, by sealing them with the same visible ordinance which themselves had received. And if members in the Christian Church have now the same interest in the spiritual provisions of that covenant which members in the Jewish Church had, then it follows irresisitibly, that they also have the privilege, and it is their duty, to include their infant children in the covenant, by placing on them the same visible token or seal which they themselves have received; *unless*, by a special revelation from God, they have been forbidden. This privilege, be it remembered, was always conceded to proselytes from other nations who embraced the Jewish religion. Although they *never shared*

any inheritance in the land of Canaan, yet they were allowed to be circumcised, as a public profession of their faith, and as the means of becoming interested in the covenant and Church of God. And when circumcised, and thus received into the Church, *they had the same interest in the spiritual promise of the covenant as the Jews had;* and consequently, the same privilege of including their children with themselves;—a privilege which they improved by applying to such children the ordinance and seal of circumcision. And in the same manner, since the spiritual provisions of that covenant are perpetuated in the Christian Church, and believers enjoy the same interest in those provisions as did the believing Jews, while they themselves receive the visible token or seal of the covenant which is appointed to be used under the Christian dispensation, it becomes both their privilege and duty to apply this same seal to their children, and thus initiate them into the visible Church, on the same principle as did the believing Jews. I say, this is the privilege and duty of believing parents in the Christian Church as truly as it was in the Jewish Church, *unless*, by some special prohibition, God has forbidden

it. If, on the introduction of the Christian dispensation, nothing was said on this subject, or nothing adverse to the then existing practice, it would follow, of course, that the Church was still authorized to include her infant children as she had always done. In such a case, emphatically, "silence gives consent."

VI. I pass now to the next position, which is that, *the privilege of believing parents bringing their children with them into covenant relation to God, and by the same ordinance which is appointed for themselves, has never been withdrawn.* I scarcely need to argue this point. It plainly belongs to those who, while they admit that believing parents might formerly bring their children into this relation, deny it to be their privilege now, to show the *abrogation* of this privilege by divine authority. But this they have not done, and cannot do; and for the best of all reasons, viz. *it is not a fact.* God has never abrogated it. The Bible contains not the remotest intimation of such a thing.

But, is it said that, in abolishing the rite of circumcision, that privilege was withdrawn? How was it thus withdrawn? The covenant was not withdrawn. I have proved that this

continues in full force in the Christian Church —that the promise is as good to the believer now as it was to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." This covenant promise, Abraham and all the Jewish Church, by God's special instruction, understood as applying to believers and their infant offspring; and accordingly, circumcision, as the initiating rite into the Church, and that which sealed to her members an interest in the promise, was applied to the infants of church-members, as it was also to adult converts and their children from among the heathen.

But under our dispensation, circumcision is abolished, and baptism is now the rite of initiation into the Church, and seals to her members an interest in the covenant promise. Yet, since the Church is still the same, and the covenant the same, how can a mere change of the initiatory rite and covenant seal from circumcision to baptism, affect the title of infants? Is not the promise still, "I will be a God to thee, and to *thy seed after thee*"? And if *this particular form* of the covenant made it the privilege and duty of believing parents to extend it to their *children* while circumcision was the seal and

rite of initiation, does not the *same form* of the covenant equally make it the privilege and duty of believing parents now to extend it to their children, when the initiating rite and seal is baptism? Most certainly it does. A mere change of the initiating ordinance of the Church and seal of the covenant, from circumcision to baptism cannot vitiate the title of infants, while the Church remains the same, and the covenant the same.

I leave it, therefore, as settled, — and I think it is *fairly*, and I hope *satisfactorily* settled, that the privilege, formerly granted to believing parents, of applying to their infant offspring the initiating ordinance of the Church, and of thus sealing to them an interest in God's covenant promise, has never been withdrawn, and consequently still remains in full force.

VII. *The Jewish converts, in the first age of Christianity, never understood the Christian Church to exclude the infant children of believers.* And yet they were doubtless made to understand the fact as it was. But, that they never understood that their children were to be excluded, is certain from the fact that they never raised the least remonstrance on the subject.

The Jews were proverbially tenacious of their Church privileges; and perhaps more distinguished for jealousy of their rights in this respect, than for any other characteristic. Now, is it to be believed, that *such* a people, after having, by special Divine appointment, enjoyed the right and privilege of bringing their infant children with them into the Church and into covenant with God, by having the visible token placed upon them, — I ask, Is it to be believed that such a people, after having, by God's authority, enjoyed such a privilege for almost two thousand years, would, all of a sudden, and *without* any express command of God, silently relinquish this privilege, and consent to have their infant offspring thenceforth excluded from the pale of the Church, and from the benefit of God's covenant, notwithstanding that covenant still remains good to all who wear its seal? Who can believe such a thing? No; instead of silently acquiescing in such a change, they would have raised a remonstrance loud enough to have been heard over the Christian world, and down to the end of time. Some of them made a mighty ado about Gentile converts not

being circumcised; and a convention of apostles and distinguished brethren was called at Jerusalem to settle the question. How much more would they have been offended, and have disturbed the peace of the Church, if an attempt had been made to exclude their own children from her pale, and from the covenant of God! But in all the records of that age, there is not the slightest intimation that they ever uttered a word of complaint on this point. The only rational way to account for this fact is by admitting that they never were taught that any such change was to take place. For if the apostles had been in the habit of excluding the infant seed of believers from the Church by denying to them the initiating ordinance and seal of the covenant, their prejudices would have been instantly roused to tumultuous excitement. The conclusion is then certain, that, from the practice of the apostles, the Jewish converts were put at perfect rest on this subject; and were never led to suspect that the privilege they had so long enjoyed under the former dispensation was now withdrawn. While their children were admitted along with themselves, they could

be brought by degrees, as they were, quietly to relinquish the bloody circumcision, and to adopt baptism in its stead.

VIII. *The unbelieving Jews never raised the objection against the Christian Church, that they excluded their infant offspring.* This they would certainly have done, if such had been the fact. The apostles maintained that the legal dispensation of the Church had passed away — that it ended with the offering up of the great atoning sacrifice — that the Church was now under the special administration of Christ; and consequently, they claimed that the true Church and the covenant were now with the Christians. This claim their enemies, the unbelieving Jews, resisted by every means in their power. They persecuted the apostles and other Christians with murderous fury; and charged them with the attempt to abolish circumcision, and the ceremonies of the Levitical law; but they never accused them of trying to shut out the infant offspring of believers from the Church and covenant of God. The plain reason was—the apostles tried to do no such thing. On the contrary, by their habits in administering the initiatory ordinance in the households of believers, they

showed, in their practice as well as by their words, that they considered the covenant promise as being good to them and their children. Hence their bitterest enemies among the Jews brought no complaint against them on this point. They evidently had no thought of there being here any ground of complaint; as they surely would have had, if the apostles had rejected the children of believers from that ordinance by which persons were initiated into the Christian Church, and by which their title to the covenant promise was believed to be sealed.

IX. *Baptism is now the only ordinance of initiation into the Church, and the only seal or token of the covenant; and hence it belongs to all who are the proper subjects of church-membership.* It belongs, therefore, to believing parents and their *infant seed.* If it is true, as I have shown, that the title of infants to a place in the Church has never been repealed, but still continues; and that they are still entitled to the benefits of the covenant, then it follows irresistibly that the infant seed of believers are now entitled to the ordinance of baptism. Further argument here is needless. They cannot be denied the privilege of membership in the Church

and the seal of the covenant without being robbed of a precious and a sacred right which Heaven has granted them, and never recalled. They are just as much entitled to a covenant relation to God, and to wear the token and seal of the covenant, as their believing parents are. And since baptism is now the only way of access to the visible Church, and is the only visible seal of the covenant, when believing parents refuse or neglect to offer their little ones to God in baptism, and thus neglect to bring them into covenant with him by placing upon them the covenant seal, they cruelly trespass on the rights of their children. They do them a grievous wrong, by shutting them out from the benefit of that gracious promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Since the Church is the same, and the covenant the same, and the rights of infants the same, now as under the former dispensation, it is just as much the duty of parents in the Christian Church to have their children baptized, as it was of parents in the Jewish Church to have their children circumcised.

Does any one ask of *what use* it can be to an unconscious babe to have him baptized?

He might with the same propriety ask of what use it could have been to an unconscious babe to have him circumcised. The one is of precisely the same use, in respect to spiritual things, as the other; and the proper answer in both cases is, It brings him within the fold of God's visible Church, and gives him a title to the benefit of God's everlasting covenant — "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." It is of the same use to the child as it is to the parent; and if one values baptism as a privilege to himself, let him remember, it as an equal privilege to his child.

God declared of the uncircumcised man-child among his ancient people, "That soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The import of it was, He should be rejected from the privileges of the Church, and all the benefits of the covenant. He should sustain no nearer relation to God than the child of an unconverted heathen. He might, indeed, by sovereign grace, be afterwards led to offer himself to God, and be circumcised; but the parent could plead no covenant promise in his behalf. And if he should be left to perish, it would be no more than the parent might expect

from having neglected his duty, and slighted the covenant of God in regard to his seed.

The same thing is true in respect to the unbaptized children of Christian parents. They are kept out of the Church and out of the covenant; — as much so as the children of the wicked heathen. It is true that they may, perhaps, be afterwards converted and received into the Church. But whatever faithfulness in other respects the parent may employ, having neglected his child's baptism, he can plead no covenant promise of the Lord to be 'the God of his seed;' and cannot, therefore, pray for his child with that assurance which he might, if he had the promise of God's covenant to encourage and support his faith. And if that child continues to live an alien from God to the end of his days, it is no more than the parent practically consented to by neglecting to offer him in baptism, and thus bring him within the scope of the covenant promise. For us to neglect the baptism of our children is to despise the covenant which God has made with us in their behalf; precisely as if a member of the Jewish Church had neglected to circumcise his son. The Lord is displeased with it; and we need not be surprised if he

leaves them in alienation and unbelief to perish. But the pious parent who solemnly dedicates his children to God, and treats the covenant as if it were as valuable to his seed as to himself; and thus honors it by causing its seal to be placed upon them, has a firm ground of confidence when he bows before God in behalf of his children. His faith can grasp the gracious promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee;" and he is just as certain of being heard and favorably answered, as when he pleads in faith for the fulfilment of any other divine promise. God's promises to believers are all conditioned upon our faith; and the chief reason why our own prayers are not more uniformly answered in favor of our children, is because we exercise so little faith in the promise of God's covenant. But if we dedicate our children to God in baptism in honor of the covenant, we have thenceforth special encouragement to instruct them and pray for them. The promise of God in regard to them is the life and strength of our faith.

Let not the baptism of infants, then, be ridiculed or despised. Let it not be lightly esteemed. To despise it is to despise the cove-

nant of God. Nay, it is to despise God himself, as 'the God of our seed after us.' Rather, let us reverence it as appointed of the Lord; and thankfully improve it for the benefit of our children, and the support of our faith.

CHAPTER VI.

INFANT BAPTISM — HISTORICAL ARGUMENT.

An important question to be decided in the discussion of infant baptism, relates to the great Commission given by Christ to the ministers of his Church, "Go ye therefore and teach [Gr. *disciple*] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 28 : 19.) What did the Saviour mean by this command to disciple and baptize all nations? In what sense did he use the expression, "all nations"? Did he intend by it only adult persons, and such as were capable of repenting and believing the gospel? Or did he also mean to include their infant offspring?

There can be no reasonable doubt that the apostles correctly understood his meaning, whatever it was. And it may essentially aid us in the investigation of this question to enquire, *What would the apostles most naturally under-*

stand the Saviour to mean? To ascertain this point correctly, we need to consider the established usages of the Church with which they had been familiar from their childhood. They were all Jews by birth and education. And being Jews, the rite of baptism could not have been a new thing to them. It is well known that the Jews had long, if not always, practiced it, whenever they received into the Church a convert, or proselyte as he was called, from *another nation.* Besides being circumcised with his male children, such convert was *baptized* with *the children of his household*, male and female. This was intended as a rite of purification. The fact that baptism was so administered is indubitably established by several English and Latin writers of unquestionable credit, as Hammond, Lightfoot, Selden, Ainsworth, and others; who cite abundance of passages from Jewish writings, both in the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, which place the fact beyond a doubt. It has been disputed whether the children of natural Jews were baptized under the former dispensation. Probably they were not. Yet all agree that the infant children of proselytes from other nations *were* baptized, both male and female.

And it was common among the Jews to call such baptized children *proselytes*, as well as their parents. Such passages as the following abound in their writings: —

"*If, with a proselyte, his sons and his daughters be made proselytes, that which is done by the father redounds to their good.*"

Again, "*A proselyte that is under age is baptized upon the knowledge of the house of judgment*, [the synagogue, or church of the place,] *and they become to him a father.*"

And again, "*An Israelite that takes a little heathen infant, and baptizes him for a proselyte, behold, he* IS *a proselyte.*" *

Let it be remembered, then, that it had been a long established custom in the Jewish Church, in which the apostles were brought up, to baptize the infant children of *other nations*, when their parents were converted and baptized; and to call such baptized children *proselytes;* which means, in this connection, much the same thing as *disciples*. The act of circumcising and baptizing them was called *proselyting*, or discipling them. Let these facts be borne in mind, and then we can easily understand that our Saviour's com-

* See Wall's "Conference."

mand, "Go, disciple ALL nations, baptizing them," &c., must be intended to include infants as well as adults. It is an obvious rule of interpretation, that words should be taken in that sense in which they were current at the time and place in which they were spoken. And, accustomed as the apostles had always been to seeing baptism administered to converts from the heathen nations, and to their infant children; and used as they were to hearing it spoken of as *making them proselytes*, whether adults or infants; now, when they heard the Saviour using substantially the same form of expression, "Go, disciple, [or make disciples,] ALL nations, baptizing them" &c., they could hardly fail to understand him as intending that they should baptize infants as well as adults. Such being the custom of the Jews, and such the use of language, it would seem obviously necessary, if he meant that in baptizing the nations they should *not* baptize infants, as had usually been done, that he should have said so. But he said nothing on the subject; and of course left them to understand his language in the common acceptation, which would require the baptism both of believing adults and their infant offspring. Sup-

pose the commission had been, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, *circumcising* them," &c., would they not, in that case, have understood that they were to circumcise the infants of believers, as well as their parents? Undoubtedly they would, unless they were specifically instructed otherwise. But why? Plainly, because they knew that circumcision was usually administered to infants. And so, too, they knew that baptism was usually administered to the infants of those who were baptized into the Church from *other nations*. And now, when they were commanded to go and "disciple ALL nations, baptizing them," with no exception being expressed in regard to infants, they must have understood it as requiring them to baptize the infants of believing parents, as had always been done. And the Saviour evidently intended that they *should* understand it so. His personal treatment of little children in their presence had been such as coincided with this view. They had heard him say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven:"—a form of expression totally irreconcilable, by any fair interpretation, with the idea that thereafter they

were not to be allowed any nearer visible relationship to him and his Church than the unbaptized heathen; but perfectly natural, on the supposition that they are still to be embraced within the pale of the visible Church. Indeed, there is nothing in all the recorded instructions of Christ which could lead the apostles to suspect that, in discipling and baptizing the nations, they were not to continue the practice of baptizing the infant seed of converted and baptized parents, as had always been the custom in the Church to which they belonged.

I see not how the force of this argument can be evaded, but by denying the custom in the Jewish Church of baptizing Gentile proselytes, and the children of their households. And no person acquainted with the historic testimony on the subject will attempt to deny a fact so well attested. It cannot be disputed without rejecting the testimony of Maimonides, the most eminent of all the Jewish Rabbins since the Christian era, as well as several of the early Talmudic writers, whose works, among the Jews, were regarded as second in sacredness only to the inspired canon. Indeed the fact is conceded on all hands, among the learned. And when the

commission to disciple and baptize the nations is interpreted in the light of this fact, I see not how unprejudiced minds can avoid the conclusion that its natural import requires the baptism both of believing parents and their infant offspring, agreeably to the familiar and long-continued usage of the Church in the case of converted Gentiles. The only thing new in the administration of the ordinance, so far as appears from the instructions of Christ, was, that they were to baptize *in the name of the Trinity.* There is not the remotest intimation that the door was now to be shut against infants; but every thing recorded warrants the belief that no change in this respect was intended, and they were still to be admitted just as they had always been. If this view of the subject is correct, as I think must be evident, then we have, in this commission of Christ to the apostles, a distinctly implied command to baptize the infant children of baptized believers.

This representation is corroborated by *the apostolic practice of baptizing households;* and, in turn, it throws light on that practice. Several examples of household baptism, as the reader knows, are recorded in the New Testament;

particularly those of the Philippian jailor, Stephanus, and Lydia. It is true that these examples would not be sufficient to establish the authority of infant baptism, if there were nothing more; because we do not certainly know whether there were or were not infants in those families. The sacred writers have not told us; and the most that we can have on the subject is conjecture. It would, however, be a little singular if there were not infants in at least some one or more of them. But I think we cannot prove that there were, or that there were not.* And the only *certain* evidence afforded by these examples is, that it was a common practice of the apostles to baptize *households*. But when we consider that the apostles, situated as they were, must have understood the commission to baptize the nations as intended to include, not only the adults who believed, but also their infant children, if now we find them going among the nations and frequently baptizing households, in perfect accordance with that understanding, it affords a very strong confirmation of the foregoing argument,

* Mr. Taylor has labored philologically and very ingeniously to prove that these households did contain infants; but I doubt whether his argument will satisfy the popular mind.

showing that the infant seed of baptized believers are, by the authority of Christ, entitled to baptism. If the commission had been, "Go, disciple all nations, *circumcising* them," and then we had found the apostles in the habit of circumcising households, who would have hesitated to regard it as an evidence of their circumcising infants as well as adults? No one, certainly; because, since infants had always been circumcised, and the commission made no exception in the case of infants, to speak of circumcising a man and his household would be *the natural way* of stating the circumcision of infants along with their believing parents. And if infants were *not* allowed to be circumcised under this commission, to speak in such a general manner of circumcising households, with no qualifying word to restrict the sense, would seem highly improper, because very likely to mislead. In such a case, when households are mentioned, infants ought to be *especially excepted;* otherwise it would be fair to suppose them included. And just so, since it had always been the custom to *baptize the households* of men converted from the idolatrous nations, including their *infant children* of both sexes, now when the commission

is given, "Go, disciple ALL nations, baptizing them," and no exception of infants is expressed; and thereupon we find the apostles going among the heathen nations preaching the gospel and baptizing *households*, how can we do otherwise than regard this as a striking evidence of their baptizing infants? To speak of their baptizing *households* would be *the natural way*, in such circumstances, of stating the baptism of infants along with their believing parents. And if infants were *not allowed* to be baptized, to speak in this general manner of baptizing households, with no word to restrict the sense, would seem to be exceedingly improper, because eminently adapted to mislead. But I cannot believe the sacred writers have stated facts in a way so directly adapted to mislead their readers. I much prefer to think they have expressed themselves in such a way that the *natural* impression from their words will be the *accurate* one. That impression, considering all the circumstances, I hesitate not to say, is plainly this; that, in their habit of baptizing households, they did not exclude infants.

Agreeably to this is the testimony of *Justin Martyr*, who lived and wrote about forty years

after the apostles. In one of his apologies for the Christians, he speaks of '*several persons among them, sixty or seventy years old, who were discipled to Christ in infancy,*' which must have occurred in the time of the apostles. By their being '*discipled in infancy,*' he means that they were *baptized* in infancy; and thus entered the school of Christ as learners, or disciples, which means the same thing. They were probably among the subjects of household baptism, as it was practiced by the apostles.

I will now call the reader's attention to another important fact, sustaining the view already taken; viz. *Infant baptism was generally practiced in the earlier ages succeeding the apostles.* In proof of this fact I refer,

First, to the testimony of *Ireneus*, Bishop of Lyons, who wrote about seventy years after the apostles. In common with many of the early Christian fathers, he fell into the mistake of regarding baptism as regeneration, and of supposing it to be essential to salvation. Of Christ he says, "*He came to save all persons by himself; all, I say, who are regenerated by him to God—infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men.*" That by "*re-*

generated" he means *baptized*, or born of water, as the word was commonly used in his day, is evident from what he says in another place. "*When Christ gave the commandment of* REGENERATING *unto God, he said*, '*Go and teach all nations*, BAPTIZING *them*,'" &c. This testimony is very explicit in designating the various stages of life, so that one cannot mistake it. He says, "INFANTS, *and* LITTLE ONES, *and children, and young men, and old men.*" All these classes were, in his time, regarded as proper subjects of baptism. Now, it is worthy to be remembered that this same *Irenæus* was born before the death of the apostle John, and was an intimate acquaintance and disciple of the venerable *Polycarp*, who was John's own disciple. And from his intimacy with Polycarp, he had every opportunity to know, and doubtless did know, what was the practice of the apostles on this subject.

Again, *Tertullian*, the first Latin author in the Church, who flourished about one hundred years after the apostles, is a valuable witness on this question. He, too, had adopted the prevailing error of his time, viz. that baptism was an ordinance in which sin was washed away; and he

supposed that sins committed after baptism were *peculiarly dangerous*, and could not be forgiven. He therefore advised that the baptism of infants should be delayed until they should grow up and become confirmed in habits of virtue, unless, from some cause, there was imminent danger of their dying. Now, the fact that Tertullian advised the delay of baptism in the case of infants ordinarily, shows that it was then a customary practice in the Church to baptize them; else there could have been no occasion for his giving such advice. And again, the fact that he permitted it in cases where their life appeared to be in danger shows that he advised the delay only from considerations of *expediency*, and not because he considered it *unlawful* to baptize them. It is a striking fact that, anxious as Tertullian was to dissuade the Church from the practice of baptizing infants, he never once intimates that it is *an unauthorized innovation*, and therefore *unlawful*. This, if it had been true, would have been the strongest as well as the most obvious and natural argument which he could have urged against it. And the fact that he does not use it — that he says *nothing about* the unlawfulness of the custom, but rests

his argument entirely on the ground of expediency, shows that he considers the *authority* and *lawfulness* of infant baptism as not to be questioned. Tertullian is sometimes referred to as a witness *against* the fact of infant baptism in the early Christian Church. But, in truth, his objection demonstrates that the Church was then in the practice of it. He admits its existence by advising its delay; and he admits its lawfulness and authority by the nature of his objection to it.

Again, *Origen*, a presbyter and lecturer of Alexandria, and a cotemporary with Tertullian, has various passages which illustrate and confirm the antiquity of infant baptism. He labored to prove the doctrine of original sin, or infant depravity, from the general practice of *infant baptism*. "*What*," says he, "*is the reason why the baptism of the Church, conferred for the remission of sins, is also administered to infants? since, were there nothing in infants that required forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism might seem superfluous.*" Again he argues, "*Infants are baptized for the remission of sins. Of what sins? or when have they sinned? or how, in the case of little children,*

can any reason of the laver [or baptism] *hold good, except according to the sense above mentioned? No one is free from pollution, though his life upon earth were but the length of a day. And because, by the sacrament of baptism, our pollutions are washed away, therefore it is that infants are baptized. For except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Yet again he says, "THE CHURCH HATH RECEIVED THE TRADITION FROM THE APOSTLES, THAT BAPTISM OUGHT TO BE ADMINISTERED TO INFANTS. *For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed knew that there were, in all, those natural defilements which must be washed away by water and the Spirit.*"

Now, whatever may be thought of Origen's theology, or the doctrine of original sin as he held it, this much must be certain, that infant baptism was at that time a common practice in the Church. This writer founds an argument in favor of his doctrine on the baptism of infants; and attempts to show that their baptism would be an unmeaning ceremony, if it were not true that they needed to be cleansed from sin. But such an argument could have had no force at all, or have ever occurred to that author's mind,

if it had not been a well-known fact that the Church had been in the constant practice of baptizing infants.

Let it be remembered that this was only about one hundred years after the apostles. We are often told that infant baptism is a Popish corruption, and many are made to believe it; but here is this eminent Christian writer, discoursing in this manner on the subject, *within about one hundred years of the apostles' time*, and *four hundred years before Popery had existence;* and affirming in so many words, "THE CHURCH HATH RECEIVED THE TRADITION FROM THE APOSTLES, THAT BAPTISM OUGHT TO BE ADMINISTERED TO INFANTS." Origen was born within *eighty-five years* of the apostolic age, of Christian parents, (his father having been a martyr,) and was himself, as he says, baptized in *infancy*. In the days of his parents, therefore, infant baptism was believed and practiced as an institution of apostolic authority.

Once more. *Cyprian*, Bishop of Carthage, who wrote about one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, gives an account of an ecclesiastical council which was held in his own church, and composed of sixty-six bishops, or

pastors. The occasion of the council was this: A certain country bishop, by the name of Fidus, entertained serious doubts whether infants should not be baptized at the age of eight days, and no earlier; in order that the Christian ordinance might more perfectly correspond with circumcision which it replaced. The subject was likely to make some difficulty; and, to settle the question, Cyprian called this council at Carthage. Sixty-six bishops assembled, and the question came before them, "*Ought not baptism to be administered to infants on the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision?*" The question was discussed at length, and finally decided unanimously, that the day was not material — that they were proper subjects of baptism from the day of their birth. This decision was communicated to the country bishop in a letter signed by Cyprian himself, by order and in behalf of the council. Here is a remarkable historical fact. In that large body of Christian pastors, assembled from different and distant parts of the Church, to discuss *such* a subject, the question was not even *raised* whether infants should be baptized at all, but only whether it should be on the eighth day. Now, is it to be

believed that, in one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, so great an innovation as the baptism of infants, if it be called an innovation, could have been introduced, and have become so widely disseminated and perfectly established, that not a voice should have been raised against it in all that body of Christian ministers, many of whom might in all probability have been personally acquainted with the immediate successors of the apostles, and through them have known what the apostolic practice was? It is utterly incredible. If the baptism of infants had not been known to be authorized by apostolic usage, before the question of Fidus could have been decided, the council must have had to settle the prior question, *whether infants should be baptized at all.* And the fact that this question was not even raised by any one, and that the council unanimously decided that the precise time of their baptism was not material, not only demonstrates that the baptism of infants was, at that early day, the general and undisputed custom of the Church, but also affords convincing evidence that it had come down from the apostles.

But if the reader thinks otherwise, then let

me ask, *When did this custom commence? Who has ever read an account of its origin?* Although the history of the Church immediately after the apostles abounds in records of innovations, heresies, and schisms; and every little deviation from established doctrine or usage was made the subject of violent and long-continued controversy, yet not *one word* appears in regard to *the introduction of infant baptism*, and not a sylable of controversy was had on the subject.* Think of this. Infant baptism an unauthorized innovation! a mere human invention! and yet, within one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, the whole Christian Church in the practice of it! and, what is more incredible still, even in that most contentious period, not one word of controversy ever heard on the subject of its divine authority! Let them believe it who can. But we must all believe it, or else believe that the Church received the practice, as Origen affirms, from the apostles themselves, and therefore had no occasion to dispute about it.

We know also that, in the fourth century of

* No controversy was had before Tertullian's time; and then, none in regard to its *authority*, but only in regard to its *expediency*.

the Christian era, infant baptism was universally practiced, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant; and was regarded as sanctioned by apostolic authority. To this fact there is any amount of testimony by eminent men of that age. *Augustine* is very explicit. "*Which*," says he, "*the whole body of the Church holds in the case of little infants who are baptized, who certainly cannot believe with their heart unto salvation; and yet no Christian will say that they are baptized in vain.*" Again he says, "*The custom of the Church in baptizing infants must not be disregarded, nor accounted useless; and it must by all means be believed to be an order from the apostles.*" He had a long controversy with Pelagius on the doctrine of infant depravity, which doctrine Pelagius denied. Augustine urged that the baptism of infants implied and proved their depravity, since they were baptized, as was believed, for the remission of sin. And he charges it upon Pelagius that, in denying the depravity of infants, he virtually denies their right to baptism, and accounts the practice of it a useless ceremony. Pelagius repels the charge with indignation; and says, "*Men calumniate me, by charging me with a denial of infant baptism.*

I HAVE NEVER HEARD OF ANY IMPIOUS HERETIC OR SECTARY WHO DENIED INFANT BAPTISM." He labors to prove that his sentiments on the subject of original sin do *not* involve any thing inconsistent with the divinely authorized practice of infant baptism. Now, the fact that both parties thus appeal to infant baptism as a test of their doctrinal sentiments, shows how firmly and universally the practice was rooted in the Church. Pelagius was strongly tempted, by his position in the controversy, to deny the validity of infant baptism; — a thing which he certainly would have done, if there had been anything in all the discussions and controversies of the time to show that it had not the sanction of the apostles, but had been introduced since their day. He must have been thoroughly informed of the doctrine and practice of the Church in different parts of the world; for he had traveled extensively — in Britain, Gaul, Italy, Africa, Egypt, and Palestine. And yet, instead of questioning the authority of this practice, he makes the affirmation above: "*I have never heard of any impious heretic or sectary who denied infant baptism.*" This was in the fourth century, and within less than three hundred years of the apostles.

Much other testimony to the same purpose might be offered, but I need not detain the reader with it. The fact is established, as well as any fact in history can be, that all through that period, and for nearly a thousand years after the promulgation of Christianity by the apostles, infant baptism was universally practiced in the Church; and not a single sect or body of Christians in all the world could then be found who denied its validity. I say no *sect*, or *body* of Christians denied its validity. Tertullian, indeed, and perhaps some other individuals, objected to it on the ground before stated, viz. that sins committed after baptism were deemed peculiarly dangerous; and hence, as a matter of *expediency*, he would have it delayed. But Tertullian urged his objection against unmarried adults as strongly as against infants, and for the same reason. Neither himself, nor any who adopted his views, ever called in question the *validity* of infant baptism. And the fact that he thus objected to it proves the prevalence of the custom in his time, which was only about one hundred years after the apostles. I will only add,

If infant baptism is unauthorized in the Chris-

tian Church, it must have begun to be practiced in the very first, or at latest, in the second generation succeeding the apostles — a time when there were ample means for knowing with entire certainty what the apostolic practice was. Why, then, I ask again, have we no account of its commencement? Why no record, or fragment of record, of that stern and powerful resistance which it must have encountered when first introduced? There must have been many faithful and conscientious men in the Church at that time — as their frequent martyrdoms prove there were — many who would have earnestly spoken and written against it. On every other subject, the slightest novelty of doctrine, or innovation of practice, was strongly disputed, not only in private discussions and ecclesiastical councils, but in books and epistles, which have come down to us, in whole or in part, so as abundantly to acquaint us with their nature and origin. But in regard to the introduction of infant baptism, there is nothing of the kind. Instead of it, almost immediately after the apostles are in their graves, we find the custom generally practiced in the Church, with no more dispute about it, as to its divine authority, than about the

baptism of adult converts. Now, while this fact is unaccountably strange and unnatural, on the assumption that infant baptism was brought into the Church without authority, it is perfectly natural and consistent, if we admit that this practice had the sanction of Christ and his apostles; and, taken along with the preceding arguments, affords, as I think, unanswerable proof that the Saviour and his apostles did give to it their sanction.

I have now done with the discussion of infant baptism, so far as relates to its *vindication*, or *defence*, as a divinely instituted practice. I have endeavored to disclose to the reader what I believe to be the mind of God on this subject; and I leave him to give such weight to the arguments, and to make such use of them, as his own judgment and conscience shall approve.

CHAPTER VII.

INFANT BAPTISM — DIFFICULTIES EXPLAINED.

I ENDEAVORED in the last chapter, to show that, in the great Commission, the Saviour gives a distinctly implied command to baptize infants as well as adults. This was done by showing that it had been a long-established custom in the Jewish Church, whenever men of other nations were converted, to baptize them and their households, including their infant children. It was shown that the apostles, being Jews, must have been familiar with this custom; and that when the Saviour commanded them to 'go, disciple and baptize *all* nations,' stating no exception in the case of infants, they must have understood, agreeably to the established usage of the Church, that they were to baptize, not only believing adults, but also their households, including the infant members; and that the Saviour must have intended them to understand him so.

This view was shown to be sustained by the corresponding practice of the apostles in baptizing households, without their deeming it important to tell us whether those households were composed entirely of adult believers, or partly of infants and children.

Consistently with this, it was shown that, during several of the first ages succeeding the apostles, the Church was in the constant practice of baptizing the infant children of baptized believers; while no one disputed the authority of the practice, and no one attempted to show when, or by whom, it was introduced, except to say that it was derived from the apostles. All this was believed to form a complete argument on the subject; and, taken along with the argument from the Abrahamic covenant, as exhibited in the previous chapter, it places the divine authority of infant baptism, as I conceive, beyond a reasonable doubt.

But even after the argument is settled, and shown to be conclusive in favor of the practice, there are some questions on the subject frequently coming up in the minds of sincere Christians, and greatly perplexing them; — questions which need to be solved in order

that the benefits of this ordinance, in its application to infants, may be properly realized by the Church without embarrassment. I design, therefore, in the present chapter, to discuss and answer some of the most perplexing of these questions; and I do it the more willingly, because several of them are often *urged* upon us by those who deny the propriety of infant baptism.

1. The question has been asked by some who doubt not the lawfulness of infant church-membership, "*Is it true that baptism initiates the children of believers into the Church, and into covenant with God?* Are they not within the Church, and embraced in the arms of the covenant, *before* their baptism? Are they not brought into these relations by their very birth?" I think not. "But," it is asked again, "was not the Jewish child a member of the Church before his circumcision? Was he not born such?" In my opinion, he was not. I know it is said of the uncircumcised man-child, "That soul shall be CUT OFF from his people; he hath BROKEN my covenant." And this form of expression, in the translation, has led some to think that children of the Jews were born into the Church, under

the privileges of the covenant. And by analogy, they suppose that the children of church-members under the gospel are, at their birth, embraced within the arms of the covenant, and members of the visible Church. But I believe this is a mistake. The expression, "shall be CUT OFF from his people," does not, in the original, necessarily imply that he had previously been in covenant as a member of the Church, and was now to be excommunicated; but, that he should be destroyed, or severed from his kindred and countrymen as an offender, for having virtually *refused*, and therefore *despised* God's covenant. The blame of this offence was not, of course, imputed to the child, but to his parents, until he grew up and refused or neglected to offer *himself* to God in the ordinance of circumcision.

And when it is said, "He hath BROKEN my covenant," it does not mean that he had previously been in covenant, and had now violated an engagement which that covenant bound him to fulfil. The idea of the original would be more correctly expressed by saying, "He hath *frustrated* my covenant." That is, he has baffled its gracious design, so far as relates to him-

self, by refusing to accept and ratify it. Consequently, such an one was to be denied the privileges of church-fellowship, and all the benefits of the covenant promise.

But it may be asked again, Does not God say to Abram *before his circumcision*, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations?" He does; and in respect to a numerous posterity, and the possession of Canaan, he had indeed already, on a former occasion, given Abram his pledge. But *the grand covenant promise* — that which is still valid and constitutes the basis of the Church — that which is, by way of eminence, called "THE COVENANT," had not been given before, and is expressed in these words, "I WILL establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The command to circumcise was given in this same interview, and as a part of the same transaction. This ordinance was one of the essential constituents of the covenant — its visible "*token*," and, as Paul tells us, its "*seal*." Without it the covenant was not valid, or of any force. It becomes of force when its terms are accepted and its seal

is set. Previously to this, it is rather to be viewed as a covenant *proposed* — not a covenant ratified. And when he says, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee," the meaning evidently is, 'I do this with the proviso, that you consent to, and accept, the *terms* of my covenant; which are, on your part, "Walk before me and be thou perfect" — [maintain a life of faith and obedience]; together with the promise on my part, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." But, as a token or witness of this engagement, and as the seal of its authority, I appoint the ordinance of circumcision. When you consent to the terms and affix the seal, the covenant takes effect. You are then in covenant with God, and in that visible Church which this transaction is intended to establish.'

Thus, I suppose, the *great covenant* with Abraham did not become valid to him — was not a covenant *in force*, until he was circumcised. The same was true in respect to his posterity, and also in respect to proselytes from other nations, who became Abraham's seed by faith, and their children with them. The covenant, in its relation to them, required the same ratification as in the case of Abraham. They, indeed, were

entitled, by God's special grant therein expressed, to *have* the covenant ratified and confirmed to them, as truly so as Abraham himself was. But it was not *in fact* so ratified and confirmed to them, until the seal was set and the token given. They differed from the children of unbelievers in this respect, viz. they had a right, by divine grant, *to be* circumcised, and thus to have the covenant made good to them; whereas others had not. But to have a right to possess a privilege is a different thing from actually possessing it. The seed of Abraham had a right to possess the privilege of church-membership in covenant with God; but they did not *in fact* possess this privilege until they were circumcised. Circumcision sealed and confirmed the covenant to them, and thus initiated them into the visible Church. Before his circumcision, I suppose the Jewish child held a relation to the Church and covenant similar to that which Abraham held after this interview with God, and before he was circumcised.

Analogous to this, I regard the unbaptized children of church-members as holding a relation to the Church and covenant similar to that of an unbaptized adult convert, now become the

friend of God, as Abraham was. That is to say, they have a divinely granted right to be admitted into covenant and church-membership through the ordinance of baptism, whereas the children of unbelievers have not this right. But, as the adult convert is not embraced in this covenant, or in the visible Church, previously to his baptism, so neither are the children of church-members. In both cases, baptism is the initiating ordinance — as circumcision was to the children of the Jews, and to the proselyte from the Gentiles.

2. The question is often asked, "*What is the relation which baptized infants bear to the Church? Or, is there anything peculiar in regard to their church-connection?*" I answer, As I view the matter, their relation to the Church *is* somewhat peculiar. I consider them as *really members* of the *Church general;* but not especially members of any one distinct *branch* of it rather than another. By baptism, they are introduced into the visible family of God, and into covenant with him. They are baptized into the name or family of the Holy Trinity; and, by covenant between God and their parents acting in their behalf, they are

thus constituted members of the Lord's visible household. The terms of the covenant are, in substance, "Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." By baptism, the parent consents to and ratifies this covenant, in behalf of himself and his children. When he submits to the ordinance personally, he promises to serve God himself; and when he offers up his children in baptism, he engages that they too shall serve the Lord; or at least, that he will do all in his power to influence them to it. The parent, so to speak, transfers his child from his own to the family and authority of Christ by indentures; and the child is, to all intents and purposes, *bound to God*. The parent thus comes under peculiar responsibilities in regard to the spiritual training of the child, and the child is placed under peculiar obligations to love and obey the Lord. He now belongs to that class of persons whom God has promised to regard with special favor; and unless he willingly forfeits his claim, by abandoning his duty and despising his obligations, he is graciously entitled to all the benefits of the covenant by which the Lord binds himself to be a Father and a God to his people. He is, indeed, visibly a member of the *general Church of*

Christ: and his baptism is a permanent seal attesting his interest in the everlasting covenant.

But it may perhaps be objected, 'If baptized infants are members of the Church general, and not especially of any particular branch of it more than another, then that particular branch of the Church within which they are baptized and educated, owes them no special duties in regard to their spiritual training, any more than another, or than all other branches of the Church.' No, this does not follow. The branch of the Church within which they are baptized and educated does owe them special duties; not, however, on account of any nearer *ecclesiastical* relations, but on account of closer *proximity* and nearer *social* relations; — just as we owe special duties to the souls of all classes in our immediate vicinity, and to those bound to us by special social ties, which are not owed to them by Christians in France or India. And if it be insisted on, that baptism brings its subject into special connection with some particular branch of the Church, then I would ask, To what particular branch of the Church is that infant united whose father is converted by the labors of a traveling missionary in the wilds of Oregon, where no

local Church organization exists; and who, being baptized by the missionary, immediately offers in baptism his infant son? In this case, both the father and the child are, by baptism, introduced into the visible Church *general*, but not especially into any one particular branch of it. The same is true any where else. Baptism introduces one into the Church general, while the act of *personally assenting to its particular covenant*, according to the prescribed form, unites one especially with a local branch of the Church. All baptized infants are members of the Church general; but not until they are old enough to give, and actually do give, their consent personally to the covenant of a particular Church, do they become members especially of such particular Church.

3. It is often asked, '*If baptized infants are members of the Church, why are they not admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?*' I answer, God has not authorized it. Why he has not, we are not told. One reason may probably be, They are incapable of profiting by this ordinance. It does not follow, because baptized infants are members of the Church, that they are therefore entitled to all the privileges of the

Church. They are also members of the *civil* community; but this does not entitle them to civil privileges which they are incapable of enjoying — the privilege, for instance, of voting, or of being chosen to office. The peculiar nature of the Lord's Supper is such that, in order to be benefited by it, he who receives it must, by faith, "discern the Lord's body." And since infants are incapable of this, it can of course be no privilege to *them* to participate in the ordinance. The same also may be said of them after attaining to adult years, if they do not become renewed by the Spirit of God. While unrenewed they exercise no true faith; and are, therefore, incapable of being benefited by this sacrament; and hence, until they give evidence of being spiritually renewed, they are not to be received to the Lord's Supper.

4. *If, after baptism, they give evidence of becoming real Christians, but have not yet themselves assumed the responsibility of the covenant in a public profession of their faith, have they then a right to the sacramental Supper?* I answer, My own opinion is that they have not; because, what they now do, they do as intelligent moral agents. This must be assumed, if

we suppose them to exercise faith. And, as intelligent moral agents, they act on their *own* responsibility, and not on the responsibility of their parents. And if we regard them as acting on their own responsibility, we must require them, of their own free will, to assume the responsibilities of the covenant. The covenant into which their parents entered on their behalf is not of such a nature as to exclude the necessity of an expression of their own will in relation to it, whenever they are capable of doing it understandingly. And it is not reasonable that they should, in the exercise of their own moral agency, and on their own responsibility, partake of the children's bread, until they have voluntarily acknowledged their connection with the family. Unless we admit that the reception of the Lord's Supper is itself a declaration, and a sufficient declaration of faith, they cannot reasonably be admitted to this ordinance until they have, in a public and more explicit manner, avowed their faith and their allegiance to Christ.

5. *Suppose, as is sometimes the case, the baptized person, after adult years, does not enter into special connection with any particular branch of the Church in a profession of faith; but, on the*

contrary, casts away his covenant privileges, and becomes a notorious sinner; why is he not made a subject of discipline? and why should he not be formally cast out of the Church, if he cannot be reclaimed? I answer, Because, in this case, the thing is impossible. Such a person, it is true, has broken covenant with God, but not with men. His baptism brought him into no covenant directly with men; nor did it, as has been shown, unite him with any particular branch of the Church rather than another; although it did unite him with the Church general. And God, by the constitution of the Church, has not put it in the power of men to exercise church discipline for a breach of covenant which is not made specifically with men composing some local church organization. To pass sentence on one who belongs to the Church general, but not particularly to any one branch of it, would require that the whole Church of Christ on earth should be called together, because no one part alone has jurisdiction over him. But this is plainly impossible, and of course a formal excommunication is impossible. And besides, all the essential purposes of excommunication are accomplished by the *voluntary*

abstinence of such baptized person from any communion with the Church.

6. *Does not the practice of infant baptism tend to corrupt religion, by impairing the spirituality of the Church?* I know this is often affirmed by those who oppose the practice; but I am not aware that any proof was ever given that such is the fact. How should it impair the spirituality of the Church and corrupt religion? Are *parents* less likely to be spiritual and devoted Christians, when all the love they bear to their children is added to every other motive to bind them to a holy life? Having brought their children into covenant with God, and thus obtained for them the divine promise, will they not be *the more* zealous, on this account, to maintain a high standard of piety? since the fulfilment of that promise depends very much on the influence which the parent exerts in forming the habits of the child. Yes, when Christian parents honor the Abrahamic covenant by dedicating their children to God in baptism, all their *parental affection* is enlisted, along with their own covenant vows, to make them faithful, in order that the conditions of the covenant may be met, and the fulfilment of the promise be se-

cured to their children. This, certainly, does not tend to impair, but to increase, the spirituality of believing *parents*.

Again, are such *children*, when they come to maturity and assume the responsibilities of the covenant themselves, and enter into communion with a particular Church, any the less likely to prove spiritual and devoted Christians for having enjoyed the privileges of the covenant, with the pious training which it is adapted to secure? Nay, such a training, securing the fulfilment of that gracious promise, "I will be thy God," must be adapted to make the most thoroughly principled, steadfast, and spiritual Christians in the Church. If, then, the practice of infant baptism tends neither to make the *parents* nor the *children* less spiritual and devoted Christians, but decidedly the reverse, how can it operate to 'impair the spirituality of the Church and corrupt religion?'

Again, there are no *facts* to justify the assertion that this practice tends to religious corruption. I am aware that the papal apostacy is often ascribed to this cause; but without the shadow of proof to sustain it. It was *State patronage*, and not infant baptism, that chiefly corrupted

the Church of Rome. Where on earth is the Church of Christ to be found in a more spiritual state than among the Waldenses, and in some of the Scottish communions; especially the Free Church of Scotland; where infant baptism, on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant, is held as a fundamental principle of Church order? How is it in our own country, where the Church enjoys *protection*, but not *patronage*, from the State? Are the denominations that practice infant baptism, as a general thing, less spiritual and active and evangelical than those who do not? Do they less frequently enjoy the out-pourings of the Holy Spirit? Do they exhibit less zeal and energy in scattering the Scriptures over the world, and in disseminating the gospel in all the forms of Christian benevolence? Have they less the spirit of prayer, and of watchfulness against the inroads of sin? Are they less thorough in resisting vice and maintaining discipline in their Churches? No, there are no more spiritual and evangelical denominations of Christians in the whole Church than are several of those which maintain the practice of dedicating their infant seed to God in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Again, the fact that *God has appointed the baptism of infants*, which I think has been abundantly demonstrated in the preceding chapters, is conclusive evidence against its having any tendency to deteriorate the Church. When he organized the Church in the family of Abraham, he opened its door for the reception of infants, and required them to receive the ordinance of initiation, for the express purpose of increasing her stability, and adding to the elements of her spiritual prosperity. And so well pleased was he with its practical workings, that, after an experiment of almost two thousand years, when he came to change the external order of the Church, and abolish such ordinances as had ceased to be useful, he left the principle of infant membership untouched—merely changing the initiating rite from circumcision to baptism. The experiment of two thousand years had not disappointed him in regard to the utility of extending the privileges of the covenant to the infant seed of believers. The measure had fully answered its design, and therefore was not abrogated, but confirmed, on the introduction of the Christian economy. Accordingly, baptism was conferred on the children of believers, as

circumcision had formerly been. And there is certainly no excess of modesty in our affecting to discover dangerous tendencies where the wisdom of God has detected none; but on the contrary, has found important advantages. Let pious parents dedicate their children to God in the baptismal covenant, and earnestly endeavor to fulfil their vows by training them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and there need be no fears entertained of its practical tendency in respect to the purity and spirituality of the Church. So far from being a source of danger, it is one of the most powerful defences against doctrinal corruption and practical apostacy.

7. *But does there not, after all, seem to be a manifest impropriety in administering so sacred an ordinance to an unconscious babe?* In reply I would say,

(1.) However the thing may seem to us, it does not become us to call in question a divinely appointed institution. When we have once settled the point, that the infant seed of believers are, by divine authority, made appropriate subjects of baptism, the same as their parents, this should be the end of all scruple or doubt in regard

to it. We are not at liberty to arraign the propriety of what God appoints. Our duty is to believe and obey.

(2.) But why should there "seem to be an impropriety" in administering *baptism* to "an unconscious babe," any more than in administering *circumcision* to such an one? An infant is as incapable of appreciating the import and design of circumcision as of baptism. And yet God did not judge the incapacity of an infant to be any obstacle to his circumcision; and neither is it to his baptism. The one ordinance is just as sacred as the other; and infants are made subjects of the one by the same authority as they were of the other.

Baptism is indeed a most sacred ordinance, because it is given by Heaven's authority, and confers important privileges. But these privileges are as valuable to infants as to adults. Suppose you lived in a country governed by an absolute monarch, as Russia or China; and the sovereign graciously condescends to enter into a contract or covenant with you, in which he conveys to you the title to a valuable estate, with distinguished honors, on eminently favorable terms. And as the ratifying seal and visible

token of your interest in this covenant, he gives you a beautiful gem, so set as to be worn on your forehead. Wherever you go, and as long as you live, that gem upon your brow is the token and seal of your title to the high privileges and possessions granted in the covenant promise of your sovereign. But in this arrangement, the sovereign promises to you the same advantages in behalf of each of your children, and on the same favorable terms as are granted to yourself. And to ratify the engagement, he also offers you a similar gem to be placed on each of their foreheads, to be worn as a perpetual witness of their interest in this promise of their sovereign. Your placing that gem on the forehead of your child shall be understood as ratifying and sealing the contract or covenant between the sovereign and yourself on behalf of the child. In this contract you engage that the child, when he comes to act for himself, shall fulfil certain conditions — the same as are required of yourself; and at the same time, you promise that you will do all you can to secure his compliance with them. If he does comply with the conditions, he has a title to the fulfilment of his sovereign's promise, of which that gem on his

forehead is a witness. If he does not, he then forfeits the high advantages procured for him through the agency of his parent.

Now, would it not be a privilege to your child, even though an infant, to have you close the contract in his behalf, and *seal* it, by placing the precious gem on his forehead? What parent would hesitate in such a case, or question the propriety of the thing, merely because the child is incapable of understanding and acting for himself? What affectionate parent would demur, and delay, and excuse himself by saying, "I do not believe in infants wearing jewelry;" or "I cannot see it to be *my duty* to bind so precious a gem on the forehead of my unconscious babe"? Would it not rather be enough, in his mind, that the sovereign offers it as a privilege? and would he not thankfully improve the privilege, not only for himself, but also in behalf of all his little ones? Or would any kind parent bind the badge to his own forehead, but refuse it to his child, on the ground that *possibly* the sovereign might confer the same favors on the child without his wearing the offered gem? Who would refuse to secure for his child the pledge of the contract, in the uncer-

tain hope of his ultimately realizing an unpledged possibility? Surely, no one that loved his child.

Well, Christian parent, that sovereign is *God*, and that contract is the *Abrahamic covenant*, and that precious gem is *baptism*. Bind it on your children as a seal of the covenant, attesting their interest in the sacred promise of Jehovah — "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee;" and thus ratify in their behalf, the most advantageous contract ever entered into by fallen man.

No, there is not even a *seeming* impropriety in the application of this ordinance to infants, when its import and bearings are rightly understood. And I marvel that any intelligent Christian can fail to see its propriety. I marvel that Christian parents can be blind to a divinely given privilege, so richly fraught with Heaven's peculiar blessings to the children whom they love. And how can pious parents, who are properly instructed on this subject, justify themselves in neglecting so important a *duty?* — a duty which they *owe* to their little ones by the gracious appointment of God; while, by neglecting it, they expose those precious objects of

their affection to that fearful denouncement of God against such as receive not the covenant seal, "That soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

I entreat Christian parents who have little children unbaptized, to consider this subject anew. Let not former prejudices stand in your way. If, like some, you are surrounded with those who make light of "baby sprinkling," as they are pleased to term it, or who look with mistaken horror on what they suppose to be a profanation of a holy ordinance, fasten yourself on *God's unrevoked covenant*, and let not your faith be driven from its moorings by any waves of prejudice, ridicule, or unbelief. If you are the father, God holds you responsible in this matter, and will by no means excuse you in despising his covenant in respect to your children. I counsel you to avail yourself of the earliest opportunity to consecrate your unbaptized children to God, and ratify the covenant in their behalf by causing its seal to be placed upon them. Then do all you can to redeem the baptismal vow, by training them up in the way of God's commands. If you are the mother, similar duties and responsibilities rest upon you,

nless your power to obey is baffled by the superior authority of a husband. If it is thus baffled, that husband may expect a solemn reckoning at the last. But in that case, you can only pray, and persuade, and maintain the duty *in principle*, and humbly wait for God to open your way. Yet, let me charge you not to be deceived by any sophistry, however plausible it may appear; and never give up your claim to the right of enjoying the full benefits of God's covenant, as well in behalf of your children as of yourself. Christian parents can never on earth adequately appreciate these covenant mercies. Eternity alone will wholly reveal their worth. But though we cannot here fully estimate their value, we can comprehend the fact that, if Jehovah be our God, and the God of our children, we have in this, both for us and them, the entire sum of all good.

Let us then do our duty to our children — bring them into covenant with God along with ourselves; cause them to wear the same sacred badge — the token of his promise; and train them up to love and obey the Lord Jehovah as their God. And then, when we sit down with them in the palace of heaven, enjoying together

the smile of the Saviour; when we walk with them the streets of the New Jerusalem, chanting the praises of redeeming grace; when we kneel among those children at the foot of the eternal Throne, and cast our crowns before the Majesty of Heaven, crying "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, which liveth forever and ever;" and there learn how much our mutual joys are due to that precious covenant of God; then, if not before, we shall rightly understand and gratefully acknowledge THE UNSPEAKABLE PRIVILEGE OF INFANT BAPTISM.

THE END.

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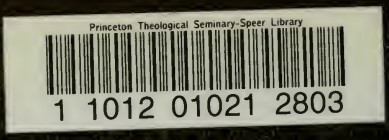
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